

Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅgau Jayataḥ

Śrī Mādhava-tithi

(Glories of Śrī Ekādaśī-vrata)

Collected from the instructions, lectures and books of
our *Guru-pāda-padma Tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrī Śrīmad
Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja and other
important Ācāryas



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Always chant:

**Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa
Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma
Rāma Rāma Hare Hare**

Important quotes about Ekādaśī

- 1) It is mentioned in the *Purāṇas* that the beloved day of *ekādaśī* can fulfill all of the desires of every human being.
- 2) Anyone who observes the vow of *ekādaśī* with devotion, whether a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiṣya*, *śūdra*, woman, or man, will attain liberation and association with Bhagavān.
- 3) If a wife observes the vow of *ekādaśī* for the benefit of her husband, she is entitled to one-hundred-times more pious merit.
- 4) *Ekādaśī* has appeared for the protection of all living entities, just like a mother protects her babies, and like medicine protects a sick person.
- 5) One can become free from this distressful material world by fasting on *ekādaśī* and worshiping Janārdana.
- 6) *Ekādaśī* mixed with *daśamī* is considered to be contaminated with all of the sins of the three worlds.
- 7) One day Śrī Gaurasundara offered obeisances at the feet of Mother Śacī and requested, “Mother, please grant Me a wish.” Mother Śacī replied, “I will give You just what You ask for.” The Lord said, “Mother, do not eat grains on *ekādaśī*.”
- 8) “For Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the day of *ekādaśī* is superior to even Jan-māṣṭamī. The Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the embodiment of all auspiciousness, manifests in this world in the form of *Mādhava-tithi* or *ekādaśī*. The potency of Viṣṇu, which takes innumerable forms, has appeared as the most auspicious day of *ekādaśī* in order to bestow all types of auspiciousness on the living entities.” (from a lecture by Oṃ Viṣṇupāda Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja)

- 9) Śrī Vyāsadeva told Jaiminī that he should certainly know *ekādaśī* to be a manifestation of Viṣṇu, and that *ekādaśī* is the best among all pious activities and vows.
- 10) Lord Caitanya said, “By neglecting *ekādaśī*, which is a limb of devotional service, one is totally ruined. One should worship *mahā-prasāda* on the day of *ekādaśī* and accept it the next day.”
- 11) If the *daśamī* even slightly overlaps *ekādaśī* during the period of *aruṇodaya* (dawn, or one hour and thirty six minutes before sunrise), that *ekādaśī* is known as *viddhā*.
- 12) The body of a human being is like a machine. If we take food three times a day, this machine does not get any rest. If one does not take food on *ekādaśī*, one’s body can rest and one has more time to engage in *nāma-bhajana* (devotional service rendered through the chanting of the holy names). Thus, one’s devotion is nourished and can increase. (Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Hawaii, 13 May 2000)
- 13) The most important reason to follow *ekādaśī* is that *ekādaśī* is Kṛṣṇa Himself. Kṛṣṇa has become *ekādaśī*. He descends to this world on *ekādaśī* day, looks after all the people who are observing its vows, and gives special mercy to them. So we must observe *ekādaśī*.
- 14) Not following *ekādaśī* will be harmful to us. On *ekādaśī* the moon comes closer to the Earth, and therefore it attracts water from everywhere—from the seas, rivers, our bodies, and so on. If one takes any grains on this day, the grains become like blotting paper. If you drink water, the water will very soon pass from the body. However, if you take grains and water together, the grains become like blotting paper or cotton and hold the water. Even if you squeeze the cotton, some water will remain.
- 15) For us fallen, conditioned souls, Kṛṣṇa has personally become *ekādaśī*. *Ekādaśī* has no consideration of caste or

creed. For example, it is not that *ekādaśī* will give its fruit only to someone who is initiated by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura.

- 16) We are not realizing the fact of how gainful it is to follow *ekādaśī*. *Ekādaśī* is the mother of *bhakti*. If anyone observes *ekādaśī* in the right way, *bhakti* will come automatically.
- 17) Preparations made from grains, wheat, rice, corn, and *dhāl* are like cotton in our stomach. The moon attracts the water in them and diseases increase. Many people die in hospitals from *ekādaśī* to the full moon and *ekādaśī* to the new moon. It is essential to follow *ekādaśī* to control our diseases.
- 18) If one observes *ekādaśī* without taking water, but does not take *pāraṇa* in time, the fruits from *ekādaśī* go away.
- 19) **Devotee:** On *ekādaśī*, can we offer the Deity grains?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, but not to *guru*. *Ekādaśī* is observed by *jīva-tattva*, not by *Viṣṇu-tattva*. We are fasting for clearing our material disease, but Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, Caitanya Mahāprabhu... Caitanya Mahāprabhu also may not be offered grains because He is playing the part of a devotee. Only Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Jagannātha can be offered grains. Otherwise, Guru-Gaurāṅga – no. The *prasādam* should not be taken by anyone; it should be saved for the next day. [Śrīla Prabhupāda Room Conversation, Tokyo, April 22, 1972]

- 20) Śrīla Ācāryadeva displayed the ideal standards for observing fasting days. On Śrī Janmāṣṭamī, Śrī Ekādaśī, Śrī Gaura Jayantī, Śrī Rāma Navamī, Śrī Nṛsiṃha Caturdaśī, Śrī Advaita Saptamī, Śrī Nityānanda Trayodaśī, and other fast days, he firmly rejected fasting on days which overlapped with the previous day. He gave the fullest protection to the observance of Cāturmāsya and *ūrjā-vrata* in Śrī Vedānta Samiti, completely following the rules practiced and preached by Śrīla Sarasvatī Prabhupāda, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, and Śrīman Mahāprabhu. He never supported

reluctance to follow the Cāturmāsya vow or laxity in honoring *ūrjā-vrata*. [Ācārya Kesarī Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī—His Life and Teachings]

- 21) According to the University's rules and regulations, every college must observe Saturday as a half-day and Sunday as a full-day holiday. However, in the school in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, the holidays were observed on *ekādaśī* and *pañcamī*. This is contrary to the University rules. When local Christians and Muslims opposed this, the departmental inspector of the University came and issued an order against me, which I refused to accept. As a result, the aid given by the University was stopped. In spite of this, the Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda Institute in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura is still running today, and is still recognized by the government. [Ācārya Kesarī Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī—His Life and Teachings]
- 22) Sārasājola is a well-known and prosperous village in the Dumkā district. Śrīla Gurudeva stayed in Śrī Madhusūdana Vidyānidhi's home in Sārasājola and preached *śuddha-bhakti* there for seven days. All the leading villagers there accepted *vaiṣṇava-dharma* along with their families. Sārasājola became like Kulīna-grāma, whose inhabitants were all great Vaiṣṇava *bhaktas* during Śrīman Mahāprabhu's time. In those days, there were only Vaiṣṇavas in the village of Kulīna-grāma; even the village dogs were *bhaktas* who observed *ekādaśī* and other *vratas*. Śrīla Gurupādapadma's auspicious arrival in Sārasājola was also very blessed. [Ācārya Kesarī Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī—His Life and Teachings]
- 23) At the present time, some people observe fasts which are not recommended in *śāstra* out of selfish or political interests. The provision for fasts given in the *śāstra* is only for the purpose of attaining the transcendental goal, and not for political or social purposes. **On *ekādaśī*, there is a provision to fast from everything, even from water (*nirjala-vrata*), and to remain awake performing *hari-kīrtana* throughout the night (*rātri-jāgaraṇa*).** Nowadays, people perform *rātri-*

jāgaraṇa by eating flesh, drinking wine, and singing vulgar, contemptible songs. In this way, they violate the rules of *śāstra*. Such *rātri-jāgaraṇa* is not included within the three types of *śraddhā*, and is miserable. These fasts and *jāgaraṇas* do not benefit anyone. In fact, such activities are performed out of the pride and ego born from excessive attachment to material desires and sense enjoyment. They also cause unnecessary pain to the body and disturb one's inner peace as well as the peace of others. Sometimes persons even die from performing these fanatical austerities and fasts. While wandering repeatedly in the *āsurika* species of life, they receive only misery. [Śrīla Gurudeva in *Sārārtha-Varṣiṇī Prakāśikā-Vṛtti* on *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* (Chapter 17, Verses 5-6)]

24) **Śrī-ekādaśī-vrata: Observing the vow of ekādaśī**

The name of *śuddhā ekādaśī* is Hari-vāsara, the day of Lord Hari. *Śuddhā ekādaśī* means pure *ekādaśī*. This refers to a circumstance in which there is no overlapping or mixture of *tithis*, lunar days. When the *ekādaśī tithi* begins one *aruṇodaya* period, or at least ninety-six minutes before sunrise on a particular day, and continues until sunrise of the following day with no overlapping of *tithis*, this is known as *śuddhā ekādaśī* or *pūrṇā ekādaśī*.

If, however, the *daśamī tithi* extends even one second within the *aruṇodaya* period before sunrise, the *tithis* are said to overlap and this is called *pūrva-viddhā ekādaśī*. The term *pūrva-viddhā ekādaśī* means that the overlapping takes place at the beginning of *ekādaśī*, or in other words with the *daśamī tithi*. One should not observe the *ekādaśī-vrata* on *pūrva-viddhā ekādaśī*. In such a case the *dvādaśī tithi* that follows will be known as *Mahā-dvādaśī*. The *ekādaśī-vrata* should then be observed on *Mahā-dvādaśī* instead of on the *ekādaśī tithi*.

When, however, the overlapping occurs any time before sunrise of the following day, or in other words with

the *dvādaśī tithi*, this is known as *para-viddhā ekādaśī*. The term *para-viddhā ekādaśī* means that the overlapping occurs at the conclusion of *ekādaśī*. This does not present any problem and the *ekādaśī-vrata* should still be observed on the *ekādaśī tithi*.

To honor the day of Lord Hari properly, one should observe celibacy the day before. Then on Hari-vāsara, one should fast even from water and remain awake throughout the night, performing continuous *bhajana*. On the next day, one should maintain celibacy and break the fast at the appropriate time. Fasting from water (*nirambu-upavāsa*) means that one must also refrain from taking any *mahā-prasāda*. Without doing so, one cannot be said to be observing *nirambu-upavāsa*.

For those who are incapable of observing complete fasting throughout the day, an alternative arrangement has been given in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (12.97), quoting from the *Vāyu Purāṇa*. There the statement *naktam haviṣyānnam* is found. The word *naktam* means ‘by night’, and the word *haviṣyānnam* means ‘sacrificial food that is suitable to be taken on certain religious festival days’. By this statement, it is understood that those who are incapable of observing complete fasting may accept suitable eatables such as fruits in the evening.

A similar statement has been given in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (12.82), also quoted from the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, regarding the method of observing fasting by appointing a representative. This is stated in the following words:

***upavāse tv aśaktasya āhitāgner athāpi vā
putrān vā kārāyed anyān brāhmaṇān vāpi kārāyēt***

If a *brāhmaṇa* who is maintaining a sacrificial fire is incapable of observing fasting, he may appoint a son or another *brāhmaṇa* to observe the fast in his place.

The complete statement of *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (12.97) regarding the method of fasting by accepting suitable eatables (*haviṣyānna*), as cited from the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, is as follows:

***naktaṁ haviṣyānnaṁ anodanaṁ vā
phalam tilāḥ kṣīraṁ athāmbu cājyaṁ
yat pañca-gavyaṁ yadi vāpi vāyuḥ
praśastam atrottaram uttaraṁ ca***

In other words, one may accept suitable foods (*haviṣyānna*) at night. All types of grains are unacceptable. Foods that are considered suitable include fruits, milk, water, clarified butter, the five articles derived from the cow (milk, yoghurt, ghee, cow urine, and cow dung) or simply air. Each of these is considered progressively better than the one preceding it. According to the *Mahābhārata* (*Udyoga-parva*), there are eight items by which one's vow is not spoiled: water, roots, fruits, milk, ghee, the desires of a *brāhmaṇa*, the order of the spiritual master, and medicine. The verse, cited in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (12.100), is as follows:

***aṣṭaitāny avrata-ghnāny āpo mūlaṁ phalaṁ payaḥ
havir brāhmaṇa-kāmyā ca guror vacanam auśadham***

The word 'Hari-vāsara' implies not only that one should observe *ekādaśī*, but other Vaiṣṇava holy days such as Janmāṣṭamī, Rāma-navamī, Nṛsiṁha-caturdaśī, and Gaura-pūrṇimā. The prescription to follow *ekādaśī* that is given in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* is meant for all men and women of all four *varṇas* and *āśramas*. All women, whether they be married or widowed, are meant to follow *ekādaśī*. Eating grains on *ekādaśī* is equated with the sin of eating cow flesh. One should observe methodically the two *ekādaśīs* that occur every month (one during the dark phase and one during the light phase of the moon). In *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (12.47), quoting from the *Viṣṇu-dharmottara*, it is said:

***saputraś ca sabhāryaś ca svajanair bhakti-samyutaḥ
ekādaśyām upavaset pakṣayor ubhayor api***

One should observe fasting on both *ekādaśīs* of the month along with one's wife, sons, and other family members in a mood of great devotion.

In the above verse, the word *svabhārya* refers to one's wife. By this statement, it has been prescribed that women who have husbands should also observe the vow of *ekādaśī*. The *ekādaśī-vrata* is invariable. To neglect the vow of *ekādaśī* is a great transgression. There are fasts originating from other desires which are forbidden for married women, but not the *ekādaśī-vrata*. In *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (12.3) it is stated:

***atra vrata-stha-nityatvād avaśyaṁ tat samācaret
sarva-pāpāpahaṁ sarvārthadaṁ śrī-kṛṣṇa-toṣaṇam***

Because the *ekādaśī*- or *dvādaśī-vrata* is invariable, it must certainly be followed. By doing so all sins are eradicated, all purposes are fulfilled, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa is pleased. [Śrīla Gurudeva's *Śrī Bindu-vikāśinī-vṛtti* on *Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu-bindu*]

25) Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, who is an eternal associate of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, serves Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa as Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī in *kṛṣṇa-līlā*. Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī, appearing as Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī with the attitude of a *sādhaka*, weeps again and again and prays anxiously to obtain the service of Śrī Yūgala. Sometimes, while praying in this way, he would become so deeply immersed in the emotional trance of Rūpa Mañjarī that he would taste the happiness of direct service. Therefore, *rāgānuga-sādhakas* must certainly follow Śrī Rūpa-Sanātana and other *gosvāmīs*. Opposed to this are those who vainly consider themselves as *rasika-sādhakas*, but who do not adopt the limbs of *bhakti*, such as *guru-padāśraya* and *ekādaśī-vrata*. They can never obtain the service of Śrī Yūgala. [Śrīla Gurudeva's *Śrī Bindu-vikāśinī-vṛtti* on *Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu-bindu*]

26) The bodily urges are also of three types: the vehemence of the tongue, the urge of the belly, and the agitation of the

genitals. Vehemence of the tongue appears when the desire to enjoy any of the six distinct tastes impels one to eat prohibited foods and to take intoxicants. A *bhakti-sādhaka* must never indulge in these things. One should carefully keep the urge of the tongue at bay by taking the remnants of Bhagavān and the devotees. **The urge of the belly will also be pacified by taking *bhagavat-prasāda* as needed, by regularly observing *ekādaśī*, and by serving Kṛṣṇa.**

It is possible to fall into varieties of bad behavior and bad association just to satisfy the desires of the tongue. Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (*Antya-līlā* 6.227) states: *jīhvāra lālase yei iti uti dhāya, śīśnodara-parāyaṇa kṛṣṇa nāhi pāya* – “One who runs here and there trying to satisfy his tongue and who is always devoted to the desires of the genitals and belly cannot attain Kṛṣṇa.” Also, *Antya-līlā* 6.236 states: *bhāla nā khāibe āra bhāla nā paribe* – “Do not eat delicious food and do not dress opulently.” Many troubles come from overeating. A person who eats too much becomes a servant of his agitated genitals. In other words, he becomes devoid of good character. The agitation of the genitals, or the desire to meet with the opposite sex, drags the mind towards material sense objects and therefore renders one incapable of cultivating pure *bhakti*.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja: Our *guru paramparā*, disciplic succession, follows the ideal, not the body; it is a succession of instructing spiritual masters, not formal initiating spiritual masters. In a song about our *guru paramparā* written by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, it is mentioned, *mahāprabhu śrī caitanya rādhā kṛṣṇa nahe anya rūpānūga janera jīvana* : the highest truth of Kṛṣṇa consciousness comes down through the channel of *śikṣā gurus*, instructing spiritual masters. Those who have the standard of realization in the proper line have been accepted in the list of our disciplic succession. It is not a *dīkṣā guru paramparā*, a succession of formal initiating *gurus*.



**His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa
Gosvāmī Mahārāja**

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Preface

We are feeling great bliss in publishing the book *Śrī Mādhava-tithi* (“Glories of *Śrī Ekādaśī-vrata*”) in the English language. Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja has written the introduction to this book. The main contents of this book are based on the lectures of Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja. We have included some additional information such as the foods that are permitted on *ekādaśī* and those that are prohibited.

The goal of this small book is to introduce the importance of fasting on *ekādaśī*. Many devotees in India and abroad have been observing a fast on *ekādaśī*. However, some take *sābudāṇā* (*tapioca*) *khicari* or *bhagara* (*varaī kā cāvala*), which is unacceptable. There is no fault in offering boiled tapioca root to the Lord and accepting it as *anukalpa* (substitute food) on *ekādaśī*; however, the process of preparing tapioca granules involves adulteration with cow-bone powder and *maidā* (fine wheat flour). Even packaged milk is adulterated with okra (lady’s finger) juice in order to increase the fat content. Sugar is crystallized with cow-bone powder. It is better to have jaggery or *guḍa* (*gur*, unprocessed sugar) on *ekādaśī*.

Many Vaiṣṇavas avoid cleansing the teeth on *ekādaśī* and simply rinse the mouth with water twenty-one times. However, a powdered mixture of 100 grams of alum, 50 grams of *ekādaśī* salt (*saindhava lavaṇa*, Himalayan salt), and two spoons of turmeric (made from roots) makes a wonderful tooth-powder that is suitable for *ekādaśī*. Generally speaking, even packaged turmeric is adulterated with *maidā*, so it is best to prepare turmeric powder at home from the turmeric root.

Using soaps and shampoos marketed by big companies may pose a problem on the day of *ekādaśī*, as they may contain egg yolk, animal fats, etc. An herbal shampoo made from one liter (0.3 gal.) filtered water, juice of twenty lemons, two spoons of *shikakāi* powder, two spoons of soap nut (*rīṭhā*) powder, and one spoon of *āmalā* powder can be safely used. One can prepare herbal *ekādaśī*-compatible and skin-friendly soap powder by mixing 100 gms of *mulatānī miṭṭī* (clay), 100 gms of *shikakāi* powder and 100 gms of

soap nut (*rīṭhā*) powder.

Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja gave many concessions to the Western devotees regarding the observance of the *ekādaśī* fast. However, now one should adhere to the strict Gauḍīya Maṭha standards in order to receive the complete benefit of the vow of *ekādaśī*.

The *sahajiyā* section of devotees does not like to fast on *ekādaśī*; they go on satisfying their senses even on that day. However, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda did not like this mentality.

In Madhva *sampradāya* temples, on *ekādaśī* the *pujārī* (priest) may offer you a *tulasī* leaf that was offered to the Lord. However, that leaf is meant to be kept on the ear or on the head; one must not eat the *tulasī* leaf on *ekādaśī*.

This book also describes some real experiences in the lives of devotees. Reading about these experiences will certainly enhance the faith of the readers regarding the vow of *ekādaśī*.

The wonderful picture on the front page is by Śrīmatī Bakulā dīdī. We thank Śrīmatī Jānakī dīdī, Śrī Om Prakāśa Brajavāsī “Sāhitya-ratna”, Śrī Keśava Dāsa (USA), Śrīpāda Bhaktivedānta Tridandī Mahārāja, Śrīmatī Bakulā dīdī, the editorial team of the Hindi Ekādaśī book published from Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, Śrīmatī Śyāmarāṇī dīdī, the editorial team of Bhaktivedānta Book Trust, Śrīla Gaura Govinda Svāmī Archives, Śrī Phaṇīndra Mankale, Śrīmatī Harṣala Rājeśa and Śrī Avadhūta Dāsa for their valuable help in publishing this book. We give our special thanks to the persons whose art, photographs, articles, transliterations and translations are used in this book. Śrīpāda Bhaktivedānta Viṣṇuḍaivata Mahārāja has compiled the information in this book from many authentic sources.

We hope that reading this book will inspire more and more devotees to fast on *ekādaśī*.

*The disappearance day of Tridandī-svāmī Śrī
Śrīmad Bhakti-jīvana Janārdana Gosvāmī
Mahārāja, the exalted disciple of Śrīla
Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda
Monday, December 14, 2015.*

*An aspirant for a particle of mercy
of Śrī Guru and the Vaiṣṇavas,
Dr. Bhaktivedānta Danḍī Mahārāja*

Importance of Ekādaśī

(by *Tridaṇḍi-svāmī Śrī Śrīmad-Bhaktivedānta Vāmāna Gosvāmī Mahārāja*)

The seventh edition of the book *Śrī ekādaśī-vrata-kathā* has been published by Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti. This book has been compiled from various *Purāṇas* and from the king of all of the Vaiṣṇava *smṛtis*, *Śrī Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*. *Nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa Om Viṣṇupāda Aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti-prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja* has reestablished *Śrī Caitanya Pañjikā* (calendar), published by Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti. In the introductions, he has given some instructions under the title *Gauḍīyera Kṛtya (Bhāgavata-dharma)* which dovetail with the ideology of Jagadguru Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda, who embodies the ideal of Śrī Caitanya Pañjikā. He has provided special orders regarding following the vows of the days of Lord Hari such as *ekādaśī*, and regarding *saṅkhyā-pūrvaka-nāma-grahaṇa* (vow to chant the holy name daily a certain number of times). Following the vow of *ekādaśī* is mentioned among the sixty-four ways of executing devotional service. Therefore, all qualified personalities have accepted the truth and usefulness of following the vow of *ekādaśī* in order to attain devotional service to Hari.

It is mentioned in the *Purāṇas* that the beloved day of *ekādaśī* can fulfill all of the desires of every human being. By following this vow all sins are destroyed, one achieves all of the goals of human life, and one is able to please Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The following are four well-known considerations regarding the vow of *ekādaśī*: observing it pleases Bhagavān; it is based on scriptural injunctions; it imposes restrictions on taking meals; and failing to follow it results in offenses accruing. The vow of *ekādaśī* is very dear to Śrī Hari. Anyone who observes this vow with devotion, whether a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, *śūdra*, woman, or man, will attain liberation and association with Bhagavān.

It is essential for everyone to fast on *ekādaśī*. A person seeking the full benefit of the fasting will refrain from dinner the night before *ekādaśī*, from all meals the day of *ekādaśī*, and from dinner the night after *ekādaśī*. All sins such as *brahma-hatyā* enter grains on the day of fasting. Therefore, one who eats the five types of grains (barley,

paddy, mustard, black grams, sesame, etc.) during *ekādaśī* accepts all types of sins and is counted among the sinners such as the killers of a mother, father, brother, or spiritual master. For *brahmacārīs* (celibate students under the care of a bona fide spiritual master), *grhasthas* (householder devotees), *vānaprasthas* (those retired from family life), and *yatis* (renounced persons), eating restricted foodstuffs on *ekādaśī* is like eating beef. There is a prescribed system for liberating drunkards, thieves, and killers of *brāhmaṇas*, but there is no provision for protecting persons who eat grains on *ekādaśī*. One who does so will go to hell along with one's forefathers. It is also unlawful for one to insist that anyone else eat restricted foodstuffs on the day of Lord Hari.

A widow who takes grains on *ekādaśī* loses all of her pious merit, and persons included in all of the social and spiritual classes (*sarva-varṇī* and *sarvāśramī*) who do so, like renounced persons (*yati*) and chaste, married women (*satī*), are also destined to languish in the hell called *andha-tāmisra*. One who observes with faith fasting on the days of *ekādaśī* that fall in both fortnights of a month, along with one's family members, will attain devotion for Bhagavān and reach the ultimate abode. One must maintain the vow of *ekādaśī* even in times of great adversity and during the period of impurity following the birth or death of a family member. If the occasional day of offering oblations to the forefathers (*naimittika-śrāddha*) falls on *ekādaśī*, one should fast on that day and then conduct *śrāddha* on *dvādaśī* (twelfth day of the fortnight, or day after *ekādaśī*). **One must never perform *śrāddha* on the day of *ekādaśī*** because the demigods and elevated forefathers never accept such condemned food. If one does perform *śrāddha* on *ekādaśī*, the person who makes the offering, the enjoyer of the offering, and the departed soul, all have to go to hell. It is the duty of all human beings between the ages of eight and eighty, including those who are weak, to fast on the *ekādaśī* of both the bright and dark fortnights. Lord Śiva told Pārvatī-devī, “If a wicked sinner who eats grains on the day of Lord Hari (*hari-vāsara*) tries to take shelter of devotional service to me, I will not accept him.” If a wife observes the vow of *ekādaśī* for the benefit of her husband, she is entitled to one-hundred-times more pious merit. Children, elderly people, and those suffering from a

bodily or mental disease may follow *ekādaśī* by eating only once at night, or by consuming milk, fruit, and roots.

Ekādaśī has appeared for the protection of all living entities, just like a mother protects her babies, and like medicine protects a sick person. Blessed and intelligent are those who follow the vow of *ekādaśī* after obtaining the rare human form of life in this world that is so full of diseases. If one abandons the vow of *ekādaśī* for some other vow, one loses the jewel he had in his hand and replaces it with a worthless pebble. Simply by fasting on the *ekādaśī* of both fortnights, one attains devotion for Bhagavān and achieves the topmost destination. One should not give up the vow of *ekādaśī* even during times of calamity or impurity.

One can become free from this distressful material world by fasting on *ekādaśī* and worshiping Janārdana. Sinful people bitten by the snake of material existence will become happy and peaceful by fasting on *ekādaśī*. One receives the highest benefit by completely fasting from all food and water. One undergoes atonement and is delivered from material existence by remembering Govinda and fasting on *ekādaśī*. The vow of *ekādaśī* is the best among all religious observances and is very dear to the Lord of the universe, who is the shelter of all happiness, religion, and transcendental qualities. Those who faithfully observe this vow are eligible to go to Vaikuṇṭha. One becomes free from all sins and achieves the highest goal by hearing narrations about the observance of *ekādaśī*, by observing *ekādaśī*, or by giving faith to others to follow *ekādaśī*. Only this day of Hari, and not pious activities such as giving charity, performing austerities, or visiting holy places, can bestow liberation.

Those dedicated to *ekādaśī* are worshipable everywhere, and for them there is no fear of disease, troubles, jealousy, depression, nor anxiety because they always remember Śrī Hari. Such persons attain spotless devotion for Śrī Kṛṣṇa because they have taste for *hari-kathā* and the pure intelligence to recognize their eternal religious duties. *Ekādaśī* is the embodiment of pious merit, the destroyer of sins, the encourager of devotion to Viṣṇu, and the bestower of the topmost spiritual destination. The Supreme Lord of the universe has personally manifested in the form of *ekādaśī*; *ekādaśī* is a potency emanating from Lord Viṣṇu that is unlimited and that pervades the

entire universe.

One should accept only the vow of pure *ekādaśī* and should reject *aruṇodaya-viddhā* or *daśamī-viddhā ekādaśī* (*ekādaśī* polluted by *daśamī*). *Ekādaśī* mixed with *daśamī* is considered to be contaminated with all of the sins of the three worlds. Demons and atheists take shelter of *ekādaśī* mixed with *daśamī*; Bhagavān bestows the desired result only on one who fasts on *ekādaśī* connected with *dvādaśī*. *Ekādaśī* that is polluted by *daśamī* is not considered *hari-vāsara*. Thus, one should perform *pāraṇa* (breaking the fast) on *trayodaśī*. Jagadguru Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has sung: ***mādhava-tithi bhakti-jananī, yatane pālana kari***. *Yatane pālana kari* means that one should reject this polluted (*viddhā*) *ekādaśī*. *Ekādaśī* has many names, and there are eight great *dvādaśīs* with different names. This book includes many histories and details related to *ekādaśī*, and there is no doubt that it will be very helpful for those who choose to follow *ekādaśī*. The appendix includes a description of the eight great *dvādaśīs*, a song about the duties on the day of *ekādaśī*, and further glorification of *ekādaśī*. These additions will provide further insight and appreciation for followers of this vow. Our service and efforts in making this book will be meaningful if readers follow this vow and attain devotion to Bhagavān. What more can we say; it is our humble entreaty that if readers find any shortcomings or omissions in this book due to our inattention, out of kindness they will let us know so that the book can be corrected. *Alaṁ iti vistareṇa* (let this be enough).

Ekādaśī-kathā (Ekādaśī story)

***eka dina mātṛ-pade kariyā praṇāma
prabhu kahe—mātā, mohe deha eka dāna***

One day Śrī Gaurasundara offered obeisances at the feet of Mother Śacī and requested, “Mother, please grant Me a wish.”

***mātā bale—tāhi dība, tumi yā māṅgibe
prabhu kahe—ekādaśīte anna nā khāibe***

Mother Śacī replied, “I will give You just what You ask for.” The Lord said, “Mother, do not eat grains on *ekādaśī*.”

śacī kahe—nā khāiba, bhāla kahilā

sei haite ekādaśī karite lāgilā

Mother Śacī replied, “You have spoken very nicely. I shall not eat grains on that day.” From that day onwards, Mother Śacī observed *ekādaśī*.

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi 15.8,9,10)

By this incident with His mother, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is instructing every living entity to observe the vow of *ekādaśī*. Śrī *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (12.7) states: *ekādaśī vrata nāma viṣṇu prīti kāraṇam*, which means that one develops love and affection for Śrī Viṣṇu by following this vow. Therefore, another name for *ekādaśī* is *hari-vāsara*, or ‘the day of Lord Hari’. As far as fruitive vows, one may observe them and receive the desired results, and one does not incur any sin or offense by not observing such a vow. On the other hand, by following *ekādaśī* one achieves devotion for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and if one does not follow it, one commits an offense and thus devotion for Śrī Kṛṣṇa will not manifest in one’s heart. Śrī Bhaktivinoda Thākura has said:

***mādhava tithi bhakti-jananī yatane pālana kari
kṛṣṇa vasati, vasati bali parama ādara vari***

Knowing that *Mādhava-tithi* (*ekādaśī*) gives birth to devotion and Kṛṣṇa directly resides in this day, I carefully accept and observe this day with great respect.

“For Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the day of *ekādaśī* is superior to even Janmāṣṭamī. The Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the embodiment of all auspiciousness, manifests in this world in the form of *Mādhava-tithi* or *ekādaśī*. The potency of Viṣṇu, which takes innumerable forms, has appeared as the most auspicious day of *ekādaśī* in order to bestow all types of auspiciousness on the living entities.” (from a lecture by Oṃ Viṣṇupāda Śrīmad-Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja)

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam describes how Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s father, Śrī Nanda Mahārāja, used to fast on *ekādaśī*.

***ekādaśyām nirāhāraḥ samabhyarcya janārdanam
snātuṃ nandas tu kālindyām dvādaśyām jalam āviśat***

Śrī Śukadeva said, “O Parīkṣit, Nanda Mahārāja fasted on the day of *ekādaśī* in the bright fortnight of Kārttika month and worshiped Bhagavān Janārdana, and then he entered the water of

Yamunā to take bath during the *dvādaśī-tithi*.”

Story of Ambarīṣa Mahārāja

The ninth canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* describes the pastime in which Śrī Ambarīṣa Mahārāja, a pure devotee, strictly observed *ekādaśī* by not taking any food and then breaking the fast at the proper time. By honoring *ekādaśī*, Ambarīṣa Mahārāja was protected from the powerful curse of a *brāhmaṇa*.

Ambarīṣa Mahārāja was very fortunate. He was a great admirer of Bhagavān as well as a generous and virtuous soul. Although he was the sovereign ruler of the Earth, he was not attached to his wealth and opulence. Rather, he was attached to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His loving devotees. He always engaged his mind in thinking about the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa; his speech in glorifying the qualities of Bhagavān; his hands in cleaning the temple of Lord Hari; and his ears in hearing about the auspicious pastimes of Bhagavān Acyuta and His devotees.

One day he went to Madhuvana in Mathurā with his wife and accepted the regulative principle of observing *ekādaśī* which gives prominence to *dvādaśī*. To complete the vow in the next month of Kārttika, he fasted on three nights— the two nights before *ekādaśī*, and the night of *ekādaśī*. After taking bath in the Yamunā River, he lavishly worshiped Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa and gave his subjects cows, delicious *bhagavat-prasāda* (food offered to the Supreme Lord), and other types of charity. When the time neared for him to end his fast, Durvāsā Ṛṣi, who has a very angry nature, arrived there. Durvāsā Ṛṣi was very proud of his austerities, his status as a *brāhmaṇa*, and his great mystic powers. The king greeted him and offered obeisances at his feet, and then requested that he accept food.

Durvāsā accepted the invitation, but before eating he went to the banks of the Yamunā River to bathe. He became fully absorbed in meditation on the Supreme Lord. On this particular day of *dvādaśī*, the period for breaking the fast was only a *muhūrta* (forty-eight minutes) and the time was running out. Ambarīṣa Mahārāja, who knew all religious principles, became concerned and discussed the situation with the *brāhmaṇas*. He concluded, “It is improper if a host

eats a meal when his *brāhmaṇa* guest is not present, as well as if one does not break the fast during the period of *dvādaśī*. Therefore, I will break the fast by drinking the foot-bath water of the Deity of Bhagavān. The *śrutis* say that if one drinks such water, in one sense it is eating, and in another sense it is not eating.” Considering this, Ambarīṣa Mahārāja broke his fast by drinking the foot-bath water of Bhagavān’s Deity, and then he waited for Durvāsā Ṛṣi to return.

While taking bath, Durvāsā understood through mystic meditation (*dhyāna-yoga*) that the king had broken his fast by drinking holy water. He became very angry, and when he returned to the palace he said to the king, “You are an imposter! Bhagavān Himself respects the *brāhmaṇas*, but you have disrespected me. You thought that it would be suitable to drink water to end your fast while I was gone, but you did not consider that this would be an offense to a *brāhmaṇa*. I must punish you for this.” Burning with anger, Durvāsā pulled out one of his dreadlocks and mystically conjured from it the demon Kṛtyā in order to kill Ambarīṣa Mahārāja. This demon, which resembled the flames at the time of the cosmic annihilation, moved quickly towards Ambarīṣa Mahārāja with a sword in its hand. Ambarīṣa Mahārāja did not move or attempt to save himself; he simply placed his palms together and remained peaceful. Śrī Bhagavān, who is affectionate to His surrendered devotees and always protects them, immediately dispatched His Sudarśana-*cakra* to save Ambarīṣa Mahārāja, and the demon Kṛtyā was burned to ashes.

After destroying Kṛtyā, Sudarśana-*cakra* advanced towards Durvāsā. As he ran for his life, he could feel the heat of the *cakra*, but it did not burn him. Despite all of his efforts, Durvāsā could not evade the *cakra*, which continued to chase him. He ran all over the universe, including to the cave of Mount Sumeru, the planetary systems such as *atala* and *vitala* that are headed by the various *lokapālas* (rulers of the planets), and the heavenly realm. Wherever he went, the *cakra*, with its blinding effulgence, continued pursuing him. Becoming desperate, he sought protection from Brahmā. Brahmā told him, “I do not have the authority to stop this *cakra*.” Frustrated, Durvāsā left and went for help to Śaṅkara, who said, “I also cannot save you; only the owner of this *cakra* can protect you.”

Exhausted, Durvāsā went to the topmost abode of Vaiṣṇava and fell at the feet of Śrī Bhagavān. Trembling, Durvāsā pleaded, “O Acyuta, O Ananta, O *brahmaṇya-deva* (Lord and benefactor of *brāhmaṇas*), O Prabhu, please save me from Your *cakra*!”

Śrī Bhagavān replied, “O *brāhmaṇa*, you addressed Me as *brahmaṇya-deva*, but I am unable to protect you. I am dependent on My devotees (*aham bhakta-parādhīna*); they love Me very much, and I love them. I do not have even slight independence from them, so I cannot help you.”

Durvāsā said, “O *brahmaṇya-deva*, I am a high-class *brāhmaṇa*, so why are You neglecting me? You are indeed the protector of *brāhmaṇas*.

Śrī Bhagavān replied, “You tried to burn and kill My devotee, and now you expect Me to protect you? How can I protect an enemy of My devotee? My devotees have given up attachment to their families and wealth. O *brāhmaṇa*, what have you given up for Me? You summoned Kṛtyā to kill Ambarīṣa, and now you are running all over the universe seeking help from Brahmā and Śiva.”

Durvāsā said, “If I have committed an offense to Your devotee, this is also an offense to Your feet. Please forgive me.”

Śrī Bhagavān said, “If a thorn gets stuck in one’s foot, one cannot remove it from one’s head. You must go to Ambarīṣa and ask him for forgiveness.”

Durvāsā replied, “You are finding fault with me, but what about Ambarīṣa? I was his guest but he took water before me, and in this way he disrespected me.”

Śrī Bhagavān said angrily, “Ambarīṣa was observing *ekādaśī* to please Me. He accepted *caraṇāmṛta* (foot-bath water from the Deity), which should not be considered as eating.”

Durvāsā asked, “What is more important—to break the *ekādaśī* fast on time, or to give proper respect to the *brāhmaṇas*?”

Agitated, Bhagavān replied, “Go and ask Ambarīṣa. You are ignorant of the truths of the religious scriptures. I do not have time to answer your foolish questions. *Śrūti*, which contains My words, says that drinking *caraṇāmṛta* can be considered as both taking a meal and not taking a meal. According to this, Ambarīṣa respected both you and *dvādaśī*. Not knowing this, you became angry. Go to him; I

cannot forgive you, but he will.”

After hearing Bhagavān’s order, Durvāsā, who was still feeling the heat of the Sudarśana-*cakra*, returned to the palace and said to Ambarīṣa Mahārāja, “O king, please protect me from the intolerable heat of this *cakra*.”

Mahārāja Ambarīṣa felt compassion for Durvāsā, and he began to glorify the *cakra*. Due to the prayers and glorification by Ambarīṣa Mahārāja, the *cakra* became pacified and withdrew. Relieved from fear of the *cakra*, Durvāsā became tranquil and began to praise Ambarīṣa Mahārāja, offering many blessings to him.

One year had elapsed from the time the Sudarśana-*cakra* began chasing Durvāsā to the time he returned to the palace. During that entire period, Ambarīṣa Mahārāja only drank water and hoped that Durvāsā would return unharmed. Now, the king fed Durvāsā a meal according to the religious principles, and Durvāsā was satisfied. After Durvāsā finished eating and left, the king ate his food remnants. Ambarīṣa Mahārāja could understand that it was only due to the mercy of Bhagavān that Durvāsā experienced all this trouble, and was then freed from it.

Durvāsā Ṛṣi contemplated, “Although I am a great *brahma-vādī brāhmaṇa*¹, Sudarśana-*cakra* chased me all over the universe. I could not save myself, nor could anyone else give me shelter. This certainly shows the power of the vow of *ekādaśī*.” Then Durvāsā went to Tapoloka to preach this truth.

Story of King Rukmāṅgada

The *Purāṇas* describe King Rukmāṅgada, who was devoted to Bhagavān and who strictly followed the vow of *ekādaśī*. He also made his subjects follow *ekādaśī* through a royal decree. Due to this order of the king, all of his subjects became spiritually purified. Thus, when they died they went to the spiritual realm of Vaikuṅṭha, and the hellish abode of Yamarāja became more and more empty. Yamarāja and his assistant Citragupta, who keeps account of the

1 A *brāhmaṇa* who meditates on *brahma-tattva* (the impersonal truth). Such a *brāhmaṇa* does not deny the personal form of Bhagavān as do the *nirviśeṣa kevala-advaita-vādīs*. By the association of advanced devotees *brahma-vādīs* can be converted into personalists.

pious and impious activities of the people, went with Devarṣī Nārada to see Brahmā and inform him of the situation. Brahmā understood the difficulty faced by Yamarāja, and after reflecting for sometime he created a very beautiful woman. He gave her the name Mohinī, and ordered her to enchant King Rukmāṅgada with her beauty and charm.

Mohinī approached the kingdom and began to sing in a sweet voice. At that time the king, who was riding a horse and looking after his subjects, heard her wonderful singing. Even animals and birds were attracted to that lovely sound. The curious king approached and saw the very beautiful, fair-complexioned damsel Mohinī. Enchanted by her beauty and voice, he proposed marriage to her. Mohinī said, “I am the daughter of Brahmā. I heard about your fame and good reputation, and wanted you as my husband. Thus, I was praying to Lord Śiva through my song. My condition for marrying you is that you promise to do whatever I ask.” Placing his hand on hers, the king vowed, “O Mohinī, I will fulfill all of your wishes.”

The king returned to his capital with Mohinī. He put his son Dharmāṅgada in charge of the kingdom and lived with her. Many years passed, and while he lived happily with Mohinī, he never disrespected the vow of *ekādaśī*. When the king developed a desire to follow the vow of Kārttika, he asked Mohinī for permission to do so. At that time the king heard the proclamation made by his son: “Tomorrow is *ekādaśī tithi*, and all subjects must follow it.” The king said to Mohinī, “At your request I have appointed the senior queen Sandhyāvalī to observe the vow of Kārttika; however, I will personally observe the vow of *ekādaśī*. You should also follow this vow with me.”

Mohinī reminded the king that he had promised to fulfill all of her desires. The king said, “I will certainly do whatever you want.” Mohinī replied, “I want you to forget about *ekādaśī* and have lunch with me.” The king replied, “Mohinī, you should not ask me to break my vow; I shall fulfill all of your other desires. I have personally preached about observing *ekādaśī*, so how can I break that vow?”

Mohinī became very angry and said with ridicule, “If you do not break the vow, your promise to me will be broken and you will go to

hell. I will leave you.” Then Dharmāṅgada arrived and Mohinī explained to him what was going on. Dharmāṅgada insisted that his father obey his stepmother Mohinī. King Rukmāṅgada became very frustrated and said, “Mohinī may stay or go; she may live or die, but I will not fail to observe *ekādaśī*.”

Dharmāṅgada went to his mother Sandhyāvalī and requested that she try to persuade Mohinī to change her mind. However, despite Sandhyāvalī’s best efforts, Mohinī remained insistent. Mohinī said, “If the king does not eat lunch on *ekādaśī*, he should chop off the head of his dear son and offer it to me.” Hearing this, Sandhyāvalī began to tremble. After regaining her composure, she said, “O king, honoring your religious duties is more important than your son’s life. As his mother I have even more affection for him than you do; however, I would rather give up that affection than see you neglect your religious duties by breaking your vow. So, you should give up your affection and sense of possessiveness towards your son, and sacrifice him.” Then Prince Dharmāṅgada put a sharp sword in the king’s hand and said, “O father, please do not delay; please kill me to protect your vow.” Mohinī told the king, “Either eat food on *ekādaśī* or kill your son.”

The king lifted the sword and Dharmāṅgada was ready to sacrifice his life. The Earth began to tremble and great waves arose in the oceans. At that very moment, Bhagavān Śrī Hari manifested there and took the sword from the king’s hands. Lord Hari said, “O king, I am greatly satisfied by your determination to observe *ekādaśī*. You, your wife, and your son will go to the spiritual kingdom of Vaikuṇṭha.” Śrī Hari blessed the king with a touch and then disappeared.

Ekādaśī Tattva

Padma Purāṇa describes a conversation between Śrī Vyāsadeva and Jaiminī Ṛṣi. Śrī Vyāsadeva explained that once, Puruṣottama Śrī Bhagavān rode His carrier Garuḍa to Yamapurī, the abode of Yamarāja. While speaking with Yamarāja, Śrī Bhagavān heard crying and asked for an explanation. Yamarāja replied, “O Lord, the sinful mortal living entities are crying out and suffering in hell due to

their sinful activities.” Śrī Kṛṣṇa approached those living entities, and His heart melted with compassion upon seeing them. He thought, “I created these living entities, so I must devise a way to remove their sins.” Thinking in this way, He personally assumed the form of the day of *ekādaśī*. He made all of those sinful personalities observe the vow of *ekādaśī*. As a result, they became free from their sins and they went to the transcendental abode of Vaikuṇṭha. Śrī Vyāsadeva told Jaiminī that he should certainly know *ekādaśī* to be a manifestation of Viṣṇu, and that *ekādaśī* is the best among all pious activities and vows.

Once, the merciful Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa thought, “Having forgotten Me, the living entities are suffering from distress and afflictions; they are fallen and helpless. How can I save them?” Thinking like this, He personally accepted the form of the day of *ekādaśī*, which became known as *Mādhava-tithi*. On *ekādaśī*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa comes to the Earth and bestows special mercy upon the living entities who follow this vow.

After some time, the *pāpa-puruṣa* (personification of sin) went to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and humbly prayed with folded hands: “Since You created *ekādaśī*, which destroys all sins, I have become weak because I cannot influence those who follow this vow. Who will give me shelter now so that I can survive? O Keśava, please protect me from fear of this day of *ekādaśī*!”

Śrī Bhagavān laughed and replied, “On the day of *ekādaśī*, which purifies the three worlds, you should reside in the five types of grains (wheat, barley, paddy or rice, *urad* and other types of lentils or pulses, mustard, sesame, etc.). This will be your shelter.”

People who eat grains on *ekādaśī* ingest horrible sins such as *brahma-hatyā*, and they must go to hell along with their forefathers. One should not give grains in charity on *ekādaśī*, nor should one encourage others to eat grains on that day; otherwise, one becomes a partner in that sin.

The vow of *ekādaśī* is eternal and should always be followed. One should not accept that vow sometimes and not at other times because observing it gives happiness to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda explained that observing *ekādaśī* is an essential limb of devotional service.

Ekādaśī falls on the eleventh day of the dark and bright fortnights of every month. In addition, two *ekādaśīs* occur during the period of *adhika* or *puruṣottama*, which comes every two-and-a-half years. On special occasions Mahā-dvādaśī occurs. In this case, one should observe Mahā-dvādaśī in place of *ekādaśī*.

List of the days of Ekādaśī

Christian Month	Traditional Month	Vaiṣṇava Month	Fortnight	Ekādaśī
April–May	Vaiśākha	Madhusūdana	Kṛṣṇa ²	Varūthinī
April–May	Vaiśākha	Madhusūdana	Śukla ³	Mohinī
May–June	Jyaiṣṭha	Trivikrama	Kṛṣṇa	Aparā
May–June	Jyaiṣṭha	Trivikrama	Śukla	Nirjalā
June–July	Āṣāḍha	Vāmana	Kṛṣṇa	Yoginī
June–July	Āṣāḍha	Vāmana	Śukla	Śayanī
July–August	Śrāvaṇa	Śrīdhara	Kṛṣṇa	Kāmikā
July–August	Śrāvaṇa	Śrīdhara	Śukla	Pavitrāropanī
August–September	Bhādrapada	Hṛṣīkeśa	Kṛṣṇa	Annadā
August–September	Bhādrapada	Hṛṣīkeśa	Śukla	Pārśva
September–October	Āśvina	Padmanābha	Kṛṣṇa	Indirā
September–October	Āśvina	Padmanābha	Śukla	Pāpāṅkuṣā
October–November	Kārttika	Dāmodara	Kṛṣṇa	Ramā
October–November	Kārttika	Dāmodara	Śukla	Utthāna or Prabodhinī
November–December	Agrahāyaṇa (Mārgaśīrṣa)	Keśava	Kṛṣṇa	Utpannā
November–December	Agrahāyaṇa (Mārgaśīrṣa)	Keśava	Śukla	Mokṣadā
December–January	Pauṣa	Nārāyaṇa	Kṛṣṇa	Saphalā
December–January	Pauṣa	Nārāyaṇa	Śukla	Putradā
January–February	Māgha	Mādhava	Kṛṣṇa	Ṣaṭ-tilā

2 Dark fortnight

3 Bright fortnight

Christian Month	Traditional Month	Vaiṣṇava Month	Fortnight	Ekādaśī
January–February	Māgha	Mādhava	Śukla	Bhaimī
February–March	Phālguna	Govinda	Kṛṣṇa	Vijayā
February–March	Phālguna	Govinda	Śukla	Āmalakī
March–April	Caitra	Viṣṇu	Kṛṣṇa	Pāpa-mocanī
March–April	Caitra	Viṣṇu	Śukla	Kāmadā
Leap year	Puruṣottama-māsa	Adhika	Kṛṣṇa	Kamalā
Leap year	Puruṣottama-māsa	Adhika	Śukla	Kāmadā

Mahā-dvādaśī

Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa describes a conversation between Śrī Sūta and Śaunaka:

***unmīlanī vyañjulī ca trisprśā pakṣavardhinī
jayā ca vijayā caiva jayantī pāpa-nāśinī
dvādaśyo’sto mahā-puṇyāḥ sarva-pāpa-harā dvija
tithi-yogena jāyante catasraścāparastathā
nakṣatra-yogācca balāt pāpaṁ praśamayanti tāḥ***

O *dvija* (twice born one), the eight *dvādaśīs* of Unmīlanī, Vyañjulī, Trisprśā, Pakṣavardhinī, Jayā, Vijayā, Jayantī, and Pāpa-nāśinī are very pure and they destroy all sins. Among them, the first four manifest due to the special junction of *ekādaśī* with *dvādaśī*, and the other four manifest due to special combinations with constellations (*nakṣatra*).

On the one hand, observance of *ekādaśī* is very dear to Śrī Hari and gives rise to devotion to Him, and on the other hand, all types of dangerous sins enter into grains on that day. Therefore, eating grains on *ekādaśī* is accepting sins. One may raise the objection that Vaiṣṇavas simply accept *mahā-prasāda* offered to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and *mahā-prasāda* is totally pure and completely free from all sins—so what defect can there ever be in accepting it? To address this, it is emphasized that the main object of the vow of *ekādaśī* is to develop love and affection for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. It is not the duty of a Vaiṣṇava to contemplate his auspiciousness or inauspiciousness by considering

whether or not he has eaten sins. A Vaiṣṇava's only concern is to please Śrī Kṛṣṇa under any circumstances. In this connection, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has shown us the ideal. Mahāprabhu used to accept the *mahā-prasāda* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as directly the nectar remnants from His lips. He would say, "You should eat *mahā-prasāda* as soon as you receive it." Once on *ekādaśī*, Gopīnātha and Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya brought Śrī Jagannātha *mahā-prasāda*, containing different types of cooked grains and vegetables, to Mahāprabhu, Svarūpa Dāmodara, Rāya Rāmānanda, Vakreśvara, and other devotees of Jagannātha Purī.

*eka-dīna gaurahari, śrī guṇḍicā parhihari',
 'jagannātha-vallabhe' vasilā
 śuddha ekādaśī-dine, kṛṣṇa-nāma-sukīrtane
 divasa rajanī kātāilā*

One day, Gaurahari left the Guṇḍicā Temple and sat in the Jagannātha Vallabha garden. It was pure *ekādaśī*, and the Lord spent the whole day and night chanting the holy name of Kṛṣṇa.

*saṅge svarūpa-dāmodara, rāmānanda, varkeśvara,
 āra jata kṣetra-vāsi-gaṇa
 prabhu bale, "ekamane, kṛṣṇanāma-saṅkīrtane,
 nidrāhāra kariye varjana*

Svarūpa Dāmodara, Rāmānanda Rāya, Vakreśvara Paṇḍita, and the other devotees residing in Śrī Kṣetra were there with Him. The Lord said, "Single-mindedly chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa and avoid sleeping and eating."

*keha kara saṅkhyā-nāma, keha daṇḍa-paraṇāma,
 keha bala rāma-kṛṣṇa-kathā"
 yathā tathā paḍi' sabe 'govinda' 'govinda' rave
 mahā-preme pramatta sarvathā*

"Some of you should chant *japa*, some of you should offer obeisances, and some of you should speak about Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa." Bowing wherever they were, everyone chanted, "Govinda! Govinda!" and became completely intoxicated with intense divine love.

*henakāle gopīnātha, paḍichā sārvabhauma sātha,
 guṇḍicā-prasāda laiṇā āila
 anna-vyañjana, piṭhā, pānā, paramānna, dadhi chānā,*

mahāprabhu-agrete dharila

At that time, Gopīnātha Ācārya, Tulasī Paḍichā⁴, and Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya brought *prasāda* from the Guṇḍicā Temple. They placed rice, vegetables, pancakes, sherbet, sweet rice, yoghurt, and curd before Mahāprabhu.

***prabhura ājñāya sabe, daṇḍavata paḍi' tabe,
mahā-prasāda vandiyā vandiyā
triyāmā rajanī sabe, mahāpreme magna-bhāve,
akaitave nāme kātāiyā***

On the Lord's order, everyone bowed down and offered prayers to the *mahā-prasāda*. Then they spent the entire night earnestly chanting the Name, immersed in intense divine love.

***prabhu ājñā śire dhari', prātaḥ-snāna sabe kari',
mahāprasāda sevāya pāraṇa
kari' hr̥ṣṭa citta tabe, prabhura caraṇe tabe,
kara-joḍe kare nivedana***

Holding the Lord's order on their heads, everyone bathed in the morning, and then broke their fast by honoring the *mahā-prasāda*. With joyful hearts and joined palms, the devotees then made an appeal at the feet of the Lord.

***"sarva-vrata-śiromaṇi, śrī hari-vāsare jāni,
nirāhāre kari jāgaraṇa
jagannātha prasādānna, kṣetre sarva-kāle mānya,
pāilei kariye bhakṣaṇa***

"We know that the crown-jewel of all rites is to stay awake all night without food or water on the day of the Lord. We also know that in Śrī Kṣetra, Jagannātha's *prasāda* should be honored at all times and should be eaten whenever it is received."

***e saṅkaṭe kṣetra-vāse, mana-haya baḍa-trāse
spaṣṭa ājñā tava, kariye prārthanā
sarva-veda ājñā tava, jāhā brahmā-śiva
tāhā diyā ghucāo yātānā"***

"We live in Śrī Kṣetra and are very afraid because of this dilemma, so we pray that You give us a clear instruction. All the Vedas are Your instructions, and Brahmā and Śiva follow them. Please put an end to our confusion by giving us an instruction."

***prabhu bale, “bhakti aṅge, ekādaśī-māna-bhaṅge
sarva-nāśa upasthita haya
prasāda-pūjana kari’, para-dine pāile tari,
tithi para-dine nāhi raya***

The Lord said, “Failing to observe the practice of *ekādaśī* leads to total ruination. If you worship the *prasāda* (on *ekādaśī*) and take it the following day, you will cross over this dilemma because the period of *ekādaśī* always ends the next day.”

***śrī hari-vāsara-dine, kṛṣṇa-nāma-rasapāne,
tṛpta haya vaiṣṇava-sujana,
anya rasa nāhi laya, anya kathā nāhi kaya,
sarva-bhoga karaye varjana,***

“On the day of the Lord, pure devotees are satisfied by drinking the *rasa* of Kṛṣṇa’s holy name. They do not partake of any other *rasa* or speak about anything else. They avoid all forms of enjoyment.”

***prasāda-bhojana nitya, śuddha-vaiṣṇavera kṛtya,
aprasāda nā kare bhakṣaṇa,
śuddha-ekādaśī jabe, nirāhāra thāke tabe,
pāraṇete prasāda bhojana***

“Taking *prasāda* is a daily activity of pure devotees; they do not eat anything that is not *prasāda*. On pure *ekādaśī*, however, they fast and then take *prasāda* to break their fast (the following day).”

***anukalpa sthāna-mātra, niranna prasāda-pātra,
vaiṣṇavake jāniha niścita
avaiṣaṇva jana jāmrā, prasāda-chelete tānrā,
bhoge haya divāniśī rata
pāpa-purūṣera saṅge, annāhāra kare raṅge,
nāhi māne hari-vāsara vrata***

“Devotees should know for certain that non-grain *prasāda* is the only supplement acceptable on *ekādaśī*. Non-devotees enjoy day and night using *prasāda* as an excuse. Lightheartedly, they eat grains in which the personification of sin is present and disregard the rite for the day of the Lord.”

***bhakti-aṅga-sadācāra, bhakti-sammāna-kara,
govindarāja chandralekha dilīpa śrīnivāsa mahālakṣmī
bhakti-devī-kṛpā-lābha habe***

***avaiṣṇava-saṅga-chāḍa, ekādaśī-vrata dhara,
nāma-vrate ekādaśī tabe***

“Everyone should devoutly honor and properly perform the practices of devotion. Then they will attain the grace of Bhakti-devī. So, reject the association of non-devotees and follow the *ekādaśī* rite by following the rite of chanting the Name. Then your observance of *ekādaśī* will be successful.”

***prasāda-sevana āra śrī-hari-vāsare
virodha na kara, prabhu bujhaha antare***

“Understand within your heart that honoring *prasāda* and honoring the day of the Lord never conflict.”

***je aṅgera jei deśa-kāla-vidhi-vrata
tāhate ekānta-bhāve hao bhakti-rata***

“Sincerely devote yourself to each practice according to its place, time, rules, and rites.”

***eka aṅga māne, āra anya aṅge dveṣa,
je kare, nirbodha sei jānaha viśeṣa***

“Those who follow one practice of devotion but disregard the others are foolish. Know this for certain.”

***sarva aṅgera adhipati vrajendra-nandana
jāhe teṅha tuṣṭa tāhā karaha pālana***

“Kṛṣṇa is the enjoyer of all devotional practices, so adhere to what pleases Him.”

***ekādaśī-dine nidrāhāra-visarjana
anya-dine prasāda-nirmālya susevana***

“On the day of *ekādaśī*, give up sleep and food, and on the following day, fully honor *prasāda* and the other remnants of the Lord.”

***śrī-nāma-bhajana āra ekādaśī-vrata
eka-tattva-nitya jāni hao tāhe rata***

“Knowing service to the Name and the *ekādaśī* rite to be eternally one, practice them both.”

(Śrī Prema-vivarta)

By the order of the Lord, everyone offered prostrated obeisances to the *mahā-prasāda*. They spent the entire night doing *kīrtana*, and in the morning they took bath and broke the fast with *mahā-prasāda*. After this, with jubilant hearts and folded hands they inquired from

Mahāprabhu, “One should fast and stay awake all night. Also, there is an injunction that one must eat *mahā-prasāda* of Śrī Jagannātha as soon as one receives it. Which of these orders should we follow? What do the Vedas say about this? Please clarify this and save us from this dangerous dilemma.”

The Lord said, “By neglecting *ekādaśī*, which is a limb of devotional service, one is totally ruined. One should worship *mahā-prasāda* and accept it the next day. Śrī Brajendranandana is the overseer of all limbs of devotional service. One should carry out the practices that please Him the most. Give up sleep and food on *ekādaśī* and enjoy the offered food on other days. One should become attached to *ekādaśī* and *nāma-bhajana* (devotional service through the chanting of the holy names), understanding them to be the same principle.”

Proper process for following Ekādaśī

The name of the pure *ekādaśī* is *hari-vāsara*. One should give up *viddhā-ekādaśī*. When *mahā-dvādaśī* comes, one should observe *dvādaśī* instead of *ekādaśī*. One should observe celibacy on the day before *ekādaśī*, and one should fast even from water on *ekādaśī*, as well as continuously engage in devotional service throughout the night. Celibacy should also be observed on the after day *ekādaśī*, and the fast should be broken at the proper time. These activities constitute real respect for *hari-vāsara*. If one does not have the strength to observe full fasting on *ekādaśī*, other arrangements are permitted. One may take, in order of increasing superiority, fruit, milk, water, *ghee*, or *pañca-gavya* or air. According to *Mahābhārata Udyoga-parva*, one cannot break one’s fast with water, roots, fruits, milk, *ghee*, words of the spiritual master, or medicine. The only exception is if one has a diet exclusively of fruits. Controlling one’s eleven senses (five working senses, five knowledge-acquiring senses, and the mind), one should follow *ekādaśī*.

More Details of Ekādaśī

In the instructions given to Sanātana Gosvāmī in the *Madhya-līlā* of Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Mahāprabhu says:

***ekādaśī janmāṣṭamī vāmana-dvādaśī
śrī-rāma-navamī, āra nṛsiṃha-caturdaśī
ei sabhera vidhā-tyāga aviddhā karaṇa
akaraṇe doṣa kaile bhakti lambhana***

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 24.341-342)

If the *daśamī* even slightly overlaps *ekādaśī* during the period of *aruṇodaya* (dawn, or one hour and thirty six minutes before sunrise), that *ekādaśī* is known as *viddhā*. If *dvādaśī* begins in the remaining portion of *ekādaśī*, there is no defect. It is certainly worthy of following. For more information, one should refer to the twelfth and thirteenth chapters of Śrī *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*.

Foodstuffs that are suitable on Ekādaśī

(1) All types of fruits, dry fruits, buckwheat, *siṅghāḍā* (*pānī-phala*)⁵, sugarcane and sugar and other substances made from sugarcane.

(2) Potatoes, sweet potatoes, *sītāphala* (*kumhāḍā*)⁶, cucumber, lemon, jack-fruit, olive.

(3) Milk and all substances prepared from it.

(4) Only clarified butter (*ghee*) made from the Indian breed of cows or the oil made from dry fruits such as groundnut oil, coconut oil, or almond oil.

(5) Among the spices, only ginger, black pepper, and mineral salt are permitted.

Rules for breaking the Ekādaśī fast

If one has followed the vow of *ekādaśī* without taking even water, one should break the fast only by accepting *caraṇāmṛta*. If one has taken fruit, one should break the fast by accepting grain *prasāda*. The vow of *ekādaśī* is only complete if the fast is broken at the proper time. When *mahā-dvādaśī* comes, the vow is to be observed on *mahā-dvādaśī* instead of on *ekādaśī*.

A list of times for breaking the fast after all *ekādaśīs* and *mahā-dvādaśīs* can be found in the list of Vaiṣṇava vows and festivals

5 Water caltrop, water chestnut, buffalo nut

6 Field pumpkin, ash gourd

presented by the Gauḍīya Vedānta Prakāśāna.

Ekādaśī Kīrtana (1)

***śrī hari-vāsare hari-kīrtana-vidhāna
nṛtya ārambhilā prabhu jagatera prāṇa (1)***

On *ekādaśī* day Mahāprabhu, who is the life and soul of all beings, decreed that everyone should gather for *kīrtana*. Hearing the sound of His own name, He began to dance in ecstasy.

***punyavanta śrīvāsa-aṅgane śubhārambha
uṭhilo kīrtana-dhvani ‘gopāla’ ‘govinda’ (2)***

In Śrīvāsa-aṅgana, Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura’s divine courtyard, He inaugurated the auspicious reverberations of the *kīrtana* in a booming voice: ‘Gopāla! Govinda!’

***mṛdaṅga-mandirā bāje śaṅkha-karatāla
saṅkīrtana-saṅge saba hoilo miśāla (3)***

In the courtyard the sounds of the *mṛdaṅga*, small cymbals, conch, *karatālas*, and beautiful singing all mixed together.

***brahmāṇḍa bhedilo dhvani pūriyā ākāśa
caudikera amaṅgala jāya saba nāśa (4)***

The thunderous sound passed through the entire *brahmāṇḍa* and filled the whole sky (reaching *Śveta-dvīpa*), destroying everything inauspicious in all the fourteen worlds.

***uṣaḥ-kāla hoite nṛtya kore viśvambhara
yūtha yūtha hoilo jata gāyana sundara (5)***

From morning Viśvambhara (He who nourishes and maintains the whole universe with *bhakti*) danced. Many groups sang charmingly, each with a different melody.

***śrīvāsa-pañḍita loiyā eka sampradāya
mukunda loiyā āra jana-kata gāya (6)***

Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita was the *guru* of one group of *kīrtanīyas*, and Mukunda was the lead singer of another.

***loiyā govinda ghoul āro kata-jana
gauracandra-nṛtya sabe koreno kīrtana (7)***

Govinda Ghoṣa was the head of another group. Gauracandra danced in the middle of the whole *kīrtana* party.

dhariyā bulena nityānanda mahābalī

alakṣite advaita loyena pada-dhūli (8)

The mighty Nityānanda Prabhu protected Mahāprabhu when He swooned while dancing as Advaita Ācārya secretly took His foot-dust at that time.

***gadādhara-ādi jata sajala-nayane
ānande vihvala hoilo prabhura kīrtane (9)***

Tears came to Gadādhara, Mukunda, Śrīdhāra, and others upon hearing Mahāprabhu's *kīrtana*, as the rising of *aṣṭa-sāttvika bhāvas* overwhelmed their hearts.

***jakhon uddaṇḍ nāce prabhu viśvambhara
pṛthivī kampita hoyā, sabe pāya ḍara (10)***

Viśvambhara danced with so much force that the earth trembled, causing all the devotees to become afraid.

***kokhono vā madhura nācaye viśvambhara
jena dekhi nandera nandana naṭavara (11)***

Sometimes Viśvambhara danced so gracefully and sweetly that He appeared to be *naṭavara* Nanda-nandana, the best of dancers.

***aparūpa kṛṣṇa-veśa, aparūpa nṛtya
ānande nayana bhoṛi' dekhe saba bhṛtya (12)***

Mahāprabhu's beauty is unequaled and unsurpassed, defeating even Kṛṣṇa's beauty (even Kṛṣṇa has no *mahābhāva*). All His followers' eyes filled with *ānanda* seeing His dancing.

***nijānande nāce mahāprabhu viśvambhara
caraṇera tāla śuṇi ati manohara (13)***

Mahāprabhu Viśvambhara danced, absorbed in *ānanda*. Hearing the rhythm of His dancing feet, the devotees became spellbound.

***bhāva-bhare mālā nāhi rahaye galāya
chiṇḍiyā paḍaye giyā bhakatera pāya (14)***

Echoing this ecstatic mood His garland swung wildly, and unable to stay around His neck, it broke open and fell at the feet of the devotees.

***caturddike śrī-hari maṅgala saṅkīrtana
mājhe nāce jagannātha miśrera nandana (15)***

The auspicious sounds of *śrī harināma saṅkīrtana* spread in every direction while Jagannātha Miśra's son danced in the midst of all the devotees.

jā'ra nāmānande śiva-basana nā jāne

jā'ra jaśe nāce śiva, se nāce āpane (16)

Śiva chants the same blissful name and becomes so absorbed in *prema* that his cloth falls down. Hearing Mahāprabhu's glories, Śiva starts to dance, and Mahāprabhu, hearing His own glories, also dances.

***jā'ra nāme valmīki hoilā tapodhana
jā'ra nāme ajāmila pāilo mocana (17)***

By this same *nāma*, Valmīki achieved the wealth of austerity: he saw all *rāma-līlā*. And by this same *nāma* all of Ajāmila's *anarthas* and *aparādhās* were destroyed at the root.

***jā'ra nāma śravaṇe saṁsāra-bandha ghuce
heno prabhu avatārī' kali-yuge nāce (18)***

Hearing *śrī kṛṣṇa-nāma* totally cuts all worldly attachments. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself came in Kali-yuga as Mahāprabhu, dancing and advising all to chant *kṛṣṇa-nāma*.

***jā'ra nāma gāi śuka-nārada beḍāya
sahasra-vadana prabhu jā'ra guṇa gāya (19)***

Śukadeva and Nārada also chant this *kṛṣṇa-nāma* and distribute it. With thousands of tongues Mahāprabhu sings the glories of this *nāma*.

***sarva mahā-prāyaścitta je prabhura nāma
se-prabhu nācaye, dekhe jata bhāgyavāna (20)***

Taking Mahāprabhu's name constitutes the highest form of atonement. Seeing Mahāprabhu dancing, the devotees became supremely fortunate.

***prabhura ānanda dekhi' bhāgavata-gaṇa
anyonye galā dhorī' karaye krandana (21)***

Seeing Mahāprabhu's bliss, the devotees embraced each other and wept loudly (as the rays of Mahāprabhu's *ānanda* entered their hearts).

***sabāra aṅgete śobhe śrī candana-mālā
ānande gāyena kṛṣṇa-rase hai' bholā (22)***

All the devotees attended *kīrtana* and Mahāprabhu personally decorated their bodies with *candana*⁷ and garlands. Śrī Gaurasundara and the devotees sang and tasted *kṛṣṇa-rasa* with great joy.

jateka vaiṣṇava-sabe kīrtana-āveśe

nā jāne āpana deho, anya jana kise (23)

Absorbed in *kīrtana*, all the Vaiṣṇava devotees completely lost sense of their own bodies and everyone else around them.

***“jaya kṛṣṇa-murāri-mukunda-vanamālī”
ahar-niśa gāya sabe hai’ kutūhalī (24)***

“Jaya kṛṣṇa, murāri, mukunda, vanamālī.” Day and night all the devotees sang *kīrtana* in great happiness.

***ahar-niśa bhakta-saṅge nāce viśvambhara
śrānti nāhi kāro, sabe sattva-kalevara (25)***

Viśvambhara danced twenty-four hours a day with His devotees but never tired, because His body was fully transcendental.

***ei-mata nāce mahāprabhu viśvambhara
niśi avaśeṣa mātra se eka prahara (26)***

Daily, Mahāprabhu (in full *prema*) danced in *kīrtana* the whole night, and only stopped three hours before sunrise.

***ei-mata ānanda hoya navadvīpa-pure
prema-rase vaikunṭhara nāyaka bihare (27)***

Daily, Mahāprabhu, the Hero who enjoys the *prema-rasa* of Vaikunṭha (Śvetadvīpa), tasted and distributed great bliss in Navadvīpa.

***e sakala puṇya kathā je kore śravaṇa
bhakta-saṅge gauracandre rahu tā’ra mana (28)***

Gauracandra and all of His associates enter into the hearts of the devotees who hear this all-auspicious description with full faith. (Thus, their hearts become Śrīvāsa-aṅgana.)

***śrī kṛṣṇa-caitanya-nityānanda-cānda jāna
vṛndāvana-dāsa tachu pada-yuge gāna (29)***

Vṛndāvana dāsa says, “Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya and the moon-like Nityānanda Prabhu are my life and soul, and I humbly offer this song at Their lotus feet.”

(Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata)

Ekādaśī Kīrtana (2)

***śuddha-bhakata-caraṇa-reṇu, bhajana-anukūla
bhakata-sevā, parama-siddhi, prema-latikāra-mūla (1)***

Dust from the lotus feet of pure devotees is very favorable for

bhajana, and service to the Vaiṣṇavas is the highest perfection and the very root of the tender creeper of divine love.

***mādhava-tithi, bhakti-jananī, jatane pālana kori,
kṛṣṇa-basoti, basoti boli', parama ādare bori (2)***

Very carefully I observe Mādhava's holy days like *ekādaśī* and *Janmāṣṭamī*, for they are the mother of devotion. Kṛṣṇa stays in these *tithis*, so by honoring them we can easily achieve Him. By deeply respecting Kṛṣṇa's *līlā-sthāna* (pastime places), I will receive their blessings.

***gaura āmāra, je-sāba sthāne, koralo bhramaṇa raṅge
se-saba sthāna, heribo āmi, praṇayi-bhakata-saṅge (3)***

In the company of *praṇayi* (intimate, beloved) devotees, I will go to all of the places where Mahāprabhu joyfully wandered.

***mṛdaṅga bādya, sunite mana, abasara sadā jāce,
gaura-bihita, kīrtana suni', ānande hṛdoya nāce (4)***

My mind is always anxious to hear the *mṛdaṅga* play. When I hear *kīrtana* describing Mahāprabhu, my heart dances in joy.

***jugala-mūrti, dekhiyā mora, parama-ānanda hoyā
prasāda-sebā, korite hoyā, sakala prapañca jayā (5)***

I feel the highest bliss upon seeing the deity forms of Yugala-kīśora⁸. Their *prasāda* enables one to conquer the five elements.

***je-dina grhe, bhajana dekhi, grhete goloka bhāya
caraṇa-sīdhū, dekhiyā gaṅgā, sukha nā sīmā pāya (6)***

My home is transformed into Goloka Vṛndāvana when I see Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's worship being performed there. When I honor Śrī Bhagavān's *caraṇāmṛta* (foot-bath water) and look upon the Gaṅgā, my happiness knows no bounds.

***tulasī dekhi', juḍāya prāṇa, mādhava-toṣanī jāni',
gaura-priya, śāka-sevane, jīvana sārthaka māni (7)***

When I see Tulasī, my heart becomes cool and soft, because I know that she pleases Mādhava. *Śāka* (twenty-two varieties of greens) is very dear to Mahāprabhu, so when I honor it, I consider my life successful.

***bhaktivinoda, kṛṣṇa-bhajane, anukūla pāya jāhā,
prati-dibase, parama-sukhe, swikāra koroye tāhā (8)***

Everything that is favorable for *kṛṣṇa-bhajana*, Bhaktivinoda

accepts every day most happily.

(Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura)

List of Śrīla Gurudeva's lectures about Ekādaśī

Topic	Location	Date
<i>Ekādaśī Kathā</i>	Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha, Mathurā	04/07/1994
<i>Ekādaśī</i> is not a day, but Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself	Los Angeles, California	05/06/1998
<i>Ekādaśī-vrata</i>	Hawaii Islands	13/05/2000
<i>Ekādaśī</i> fulfills all the desires	Houston, Texas	2001
The glories of Ambarīṣa Mahārāja	Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha, Mathurā	22-24/08/2001
<i>Mādhava-tithi</i>	Brisbane, Australia	23/02/2002
The story of King Rukmāṅgada	Houston, Texas	27/05/2007

The scientific reason behind not taking grains on Ekādaśī

During the bright and dark fortnights of every month, from *ekādaśī* until the full-moon day, and from *ekādaśī* until the new-moon day, there is an increased high tide in the oceans, and the waves rise very high. This is because the moon comes somewhat closer to the Earth and pulls the water towards itself by force of gravity. Ninety percent of the human body is fluid in nature. The moon has a strong influence on water during the above-mentioned days. If one eats grains, they absorb water and there is an increased chance of developing diseases due to the moon's gravity attracting the water.

The body of a human being is like a machine. If we take food three times a day, this machine does not get any rest. If one does not take food on *ekādaśī*, one's body can rest and one has more time to engage in *nāma-bhajana* (devotional service rendered through the chanting of the holy names). Thus, one's devotion is nourished and can increase.

(Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Hawaii, 13 May 2000)

The Vow of Ekādaśī

Hawaii: May 13, 2000

You are all observing *ekādaśī* today. We should surely observe *ekādaśī*—strictly avoiding grains, or anything prepared with any kind of grains, such as wheat, barley, corn, and so on. If you observe *ekādaśī*, chant the holy name, hear *hari-kathā* in high-class association, always remain with elevated devotees, and perform any of the nine limbs of *bhakti*, you will never fall down.

Sometimes, due to Kali-yuga and *māyā*, we become weak and cannot follow; that is why we fall down. In any situation, we must not forget to chant and remember Kṛṣṇa, and also to follow *ekādaśī*. Even if you are weak, try to strictly follow these principles.

Do you know the reason why waves come and go, and why on special days—from *ekādaśī* to Pūrṇimā and *ekādaśī* to Amāvasyā—waves are very high? Even if there is no wind, still, from *ekādaśī* to the full moon and dark moon, the water increases and there are so many high waves. Why is this? It is due to the moon. Water and waves increase due to the moon. The moon comes nearer on those days, and extracts the water.

Similarly, there is some water in our stomachs and bodies. Therefore, if we are not very careful in these five days in every fifteen, the moon will increase all our diseases. You can see in hospitals that most people die within these five days.

We have *rasa*, or water, within us, and wherever there is liquid, the mood attracts it. Thus, all kinds of diseases increase. However, if we are very careful by following the ancient Indian (or Vedic) process of *ekādaśī*, this can be controlled very easily. How do we do this? By not drinking water and taking grains. If you are weak, and you are taking water or juice but not grains, then you can save yourself. If you are taking any preparation made from grains, it will absorb the water and become saturated with that water. If you put a stone or wood in water, this will not absorb water, whereas if you give any blotting paper or cotton, it will absorb so much that it will remain fully saturated for the entire day. It will not dry, even in the sun. If you drink water but do not take grains, then like a stone, you will not be affected. However, if you take grains, the moon will attract the water, those grains will become saturated with the water,

and so many kinds of sickness will come. You may even die; so be careful about this.

Here is another analogy to help us understand. The government allows that within each week there is a one- or two-day holiday. Why have they made one or two holidays? Why not work for all seven days of each week? If you work every day of the seven days, you will be tired and you won't be able to continue the next day. Similarly, the stomach contains so many worms, which digest what we eat. If you do not give them rest, they are not able to continue digesting and they will become diseased. The whole world is suffering due to not giving the stomach any rest.

Moreover, the most important reason to follow *ekādaśī* is that *ekādaśī* is Kṛṣṇa Himself. Kṛṣṇa has become *ekādaśī*. He descends to this world on *ekādaśī* day, looks after all the people who are observing its vows, and gives special mercy to them. So we must observe *ekādaśī*.

Once, on the day of *ekādaśī*, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was in Purī with all of His associates like Svarūpa Dāmodara, Rāya Rāmānanda, Nityānanda Prabhu, and thousands of other devotees. They were performing *kīrtana* throughout the day and night—remembering Kṛṣṇa, hearing *hari-kathā*, and not sleeping for even a moment. In the meantime, at about 8:00 in the evening, the *pañḍās* (priests) of Jagannātha Purī brought a great quantity of delicious, sweet *mahā-prasāda* and placed it in front of Mahāprabhu and His devotees.

It has been written in the scriptures, like the *Purāṇas* and others, that when one receives *mahā-prasāda* he should take it at once, without a moment's delay. When Caitanya Mahāprabhu saw the *mahā-prasāda*, He became so happy. He prayed to that *mahā-prasāda* in various ways and performed its *parikramā* throughout the night. He quoted many *śloka*s from *śāstra*, explaining which he said that even the *mahā-prasāda* taken by hogs, pigs, crows, and dogs is still *mahā-prasāda*; it is so powerful. We should not dishonor it; rather, we should take it. Even if it is rotten or dry, or brought from faraway places, we should still honor it.

When it became morning, Mahāprabhu took bath in the sea along with all His associates, and then told them, “Let us now divide this

prasāda and then honor it.”

On the day of *ekādaśī*, we should honor *ekādaśī* by not taking grains. *Ekādaśī* is the mother of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, love and affection. If you do not follow *ekādaśī*, *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* will never come. If you are young and strong, you can fast all day, not taking anything—no fruits, vegetables, juice, or even water. If you are not so strong, or you are sick or old, you can take a few fruits, or a little juice or milk. Don’t take a large quantity of juice—one or two kilos three or four times a day—or a *rabrī* (sweet), or other such preparations. You should take very little, only to maintain your life. You should not sleep at all during the day and you should chant like Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura; then, the fruit of *ekādaśī* will come.

There are so many examples about *ekādaśī* in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, such as the story of Ambarīṣa Mahārāja. Mahārāja Ambarīṣa was a very powerful king who was attacked by an agent of Durvāsā Ṛṣi. Durvāsā was not an angry person; he is a manifestation of Maheśvara (Lord Śiva). He was a high-class devotee. He wanted to glorify *bhaktas* and *ekādaśī*, so he played a trick, just as Śaṅkara preached *māyāvāda* philosophy on the order of Kṛṣṇa. Śaṅkara did this for the welfare of the whole world.

On our own, we cannot understand why the sage Durvāsā did so many apparently cruel things. Actually, he is an exalted devotee, always serving and glorifying Kṛṣṇa. He wanted to give some teachings to us conditioned souls. That is why, just before *dvādaśī-pāraṇa* (the exact time for breaking the *ekādaśī* fast), he told Mahārāja Ambarīṣa, “I am accepting your invitation to take *prasāda* here, but first I must take bath in the river and chant my *gāyatrī-mantras*.” Yamunā was very near, so he went there to take bath and recite prayers, and he intentionally returned late—after the *pāraṇa* time (time for breaking the fast) was over.

We should try to be humble like Ambarīṣa Mahārāja, and very strong in the conclusions of *bhakti*. He was so humble that for one year he waited for Durvāsā to come back, thinking, “I must satisfy him first, and then I can take *prasāda*.” He was so humble.

***tṛṇād api sunīcena taror api sahiṣṇunā
amāninā mānadena kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ***

[“Thinking oneself to be even lower and more worthless than

insignificant grass which has been trampled beneath everyone’s feet, being more tolerant than a tree, being pride-less, and offering respect to all others according to their respective positions, one should continuously chant the holy name of Śrī Hari.” (Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka, verse 3)]

We should be more humble than a blade of grass which, if trampled, never protests. We should be more tolerant than trees whose bark, wood, fruit, shade, and seeds are all for others. Even if you go to cut down a tree, it still gives you shade, fruits, and wood for chairs, beds, etc. Even if it is drying up and dying, it still will not ask for water. We should be more humble than that tree.

Try to give honor to all, in accordance with their qualifications in *bhakti*. Don’t desire your own praise. If you are like this, then when you chant and remember, you will be able to attain *kṛṣṇa-prema* very easily—otherwise not.

The Powers Of An Ekādaśī Family

Badger, California: June 20, 1998

Today is *ekādaśī*. I have discussed before that we have eleven (*ekādaśa* is the Sanskrit word for eleven) senses including the mind. By *ekādaśī*, we will always want to be near the Supreme Personality of Godhead. [On the previous *ekādaśī*, which was June 5th, Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja said, “This is called *upa* (near)-*vāsa* (residing).” *Upavāsa* generally means ‘fasting’, but here Śrīla Mahārāja gives a deeper meaning—the editors.]

If all of our senses are serving the Supreme Lord, we will surely be with the Supreme Godhead. The mind can remember Him; the ears can hear His *hari-kathā*; the eyes can see the Deities; the head can offer obeisance to the *Bhāgavatam*, the devotees, and the Deities; the hands can perform *arcana*; the tongue can speak *hari-kathā* and sing *kīrtana*; and the feet can walk here—this is now a strong and sacred *tīrtha* where *hari-kathā* goes on.

There are two gains in this: external and internal. On this very day, until the full moon or new moon day, if you go to the ocean you will see very high waves. Why? The moon has some connection with water. We have water in our bodies. If you do not control what you eat and drink on the *ekādaśī* day (the eleventh day of the full and

new moon), then whatever disease you have may increase from *ekādaśī* up to the full moon or new moon. If you fully fast, the moon will have no bad effect, but if you take grains, *capātīs*, bread, and too much water, then it will have an effect. You can take account of the big hospitals and see that so many more patients die from *ekādaśī* to the full moon or new moon day, and after that it is ‘normal’ again.

If you don’t eat anything that you are not supposed to eat, then all things will be controlled and a good effect will come. Your body will be very strong, healthy, and light, and your digestion will be okay. On the other hand, if you eat bread, for example, it acts like blotting paper. If you drink water, it will pass out of the body as urine or sweat, just as if you pour water on a stone, cloth, or oil, it will go away. However, if you put a heap of cotton in water, that cotton will take days to dry. Even if you squeeze the cotton, it will still contain some water.

[June 5th: Not following *ekādaśī* will be harmful to us. On *ekādaśī* the moon comes closer to the Earth, and therefore it attracts water from everywhere—from the seas, rivers, our bodies, and so on. If one takes any grains on this day, the grains become like blotting paper. If you drink water, the water will very soon pass from the body. However, if you take grains and water together, the grains become like blotting paper or cotton and hold the water. Even if you squeeze the cotton, some water will remain.

Similarly, if you eat any grain, that grain becomes like a sponge; it will hold a lot of water. The moon will attract that water and all your diseases will increase. You can see this in the sea or ocean. At this time there are high tides and the waves also become very high.]

Our *ṛṣis* (sages) were realized in these topics—both materially and spiritually. It is said that we should not take any grain on *ekādaśī*. If you are influenced by Kali-yuga and become hungry from not taking grains, there is no harm—you can take water or juice. However, you should not take it constantly: first grape juice, then *rabrī*, then *malāī* (cream), then mango juice, then apple juice, and after that, very, very good *capātīs* made with potato flour—eating, eating, and eating. This will have a bad effect on that *ekādaśī* day.

You can take water twice a day on *ekādaśī*. Or, if you can’t just

do that, you can also take fruits and certain vegetables once in the evening. If you are feeling weak, then you can take water and a little food two times, but don't take too much; otherwise, you will not get the fruit of *ekādaśī*. Externally, for worldly reasons, this fasting is good for your health. Also, for poor persons, if they drink water and take nothing else on that *ekādaśī* day, they don't have to spend money. If one takes so many things, like juice and dried fruits, it will cost so much.

For your increased spiritual advancement on *ekādaśī*, if you hear the holy name, chant, remember Kṛṣṇa, and hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in the assembly of devotees, you will quickly develop *kṛṣṇa-prema*.

For us fallen, conditioned souls, Kṛṣṇa has personally become *ekādaśī*. *Ekādaśī* has no consideration of caste or creed. For example, it is not that *ekādaśī* will give its fruit only to someone who is initiated by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. If anyone, irrespective of caste or creed or any designation, follows *ekādaśī*, he will gain internally and externally.

You may already know the history of Ambarīṣa Mahārāja, so I won't speak much about it now. He engaged in worldly affairs. He was not a renounced *sannyāsī* or *brahmacārī*. He was a great ruler, a king, with a wife and children. He had a large treasury, an army, and so many commanders and priests, but he was superior to Durvāsā Ṛṣi, a *brahma-jñānī*. If Durvāsā Ṛṣi would curse anyone to die, that person would die; and if anyone had died, then he could sprinkle water on them and say, "Come on, come on, why are you sleeping?" and that person would immediately return to life. Still, Mahārāja Ambarīṣa defeated Durvāsā Ṛṣi. Ambarīṣa Mahārāja considered, "I will have to give honor to *ekādaśī*, not to any *brahma-jñānī* or *yogī*." He wanted to honor both, but when there was a contradiction, he preferred that *ekādaśī* should be more honored than this class of *brāhmaṇa*.

You may also know the history of Rukmāṅgada and Dharmāṅgada. Rukmāṅgada was a king, a very big emperor, and his son's name was Dharmāṅgada. He was accustomed to fully observing *ekādaśī*. He would not eat anything the night before *ekādaśī*, then he would fully fast on *ekādaśī*, and on the third day he

would take some *mahā-prasāda* as *pāraṇa* (the breaking of the fast) after honoring all Vaiṣṇavas and worshiping Kṛṣṇa. After that, he would fast the rest of the day. He did not sleep for three nights, and he would continually chant and remember the Lord.

This is full *ekādaśī*. In Kali-yuga it is not possible to follow that; this was perhaps in Satya-yuga. Some concessions have been given in Kali-yuga, but don't take undue advantage of this. Try to follow as much as you can.

Rukmāṅgada was not only practicing *ekādaśī* in that way, but he would make an announcement throughout his kingdom on the day before, that all his subjects should obey him and observe *ekādaśī*—and all would do so.

When the king became older at about fifty years of age, he gave his kingdom and position to his son, as he wanted to go into the dense forest to fully chant and remember Kṛṣṇa.

In the forest, he was practicing all of his spiritual duties. One day a very beautiful, half-naked teenage girl came along, playing and picking flowers. Seeing her standing practically in front of him, the king said to her, “You are so beautiful. Who are you, and why have you come here?” She replied, “I have been searching for a husband, but I have not found anyone in the world to marry. Now I have seen you, who are so beautiful; and even though your age is more than fifty years, you look young, like a youth of sixteen. I want to marry you.”

The king told that girl, “I have left all material things, but you are so beautiful, so I will not neglect you. I want to marry you too.” She said, “If we marry, we will have to return to the kingdom. You will again have to be king, and you will have to obey me.” “No problem,” he replied, “I will obey you.” Then she said, “If you do not obey me, I will at once divorce you.” The king assured her, “I will try to always obey you. I will not neglect you.”

He sent a message to his son: “I am returning with my new wife.” When his son heard this, he became joyful, thinking, “Now my father is coming.” He called to his mother, “Mother, the king is coming with his newly-married wife. You should not think that you are the queen. You should treat her like your older sister and try to serve them both. I will also try to do this.”

This is hard to follow nowadays. If a wife sees her husband smiling and speaking to another girl, especially a young, beautiful teenage girl, she will become upset, thinking, “What to do?! What to do?!” Then, if she again sees this, she may commit suicide, or she may give poison to her husband and his beloved as well. All intelligence disappears at that time. Here, however, when the king came with his new bride, the first queen and her son personally performed *ārati* to them both. She took the king’s foot-dust and told him, “I am your *dāsī*, your maidservant.” She continued to serve them as the king and queen. She fully gave up her false ego that, “I am queen.” She always gave preference to them.

All wives should try to be like this. If your husband talks or smiles with another, what harm is it to you? Is there any harm if he loves both you and another lady? Kṛṣṇa had so many queens. Rukmiṇī did not object, nor did Satyabhāmā. Satyabhāmā used to have *māna* with Kṛṣṇa, but not towards her sisters. Moreover, this was transcendental.

When the next *ekādaśī* was about to come, the king’s son Dharmāṅgada went out to declare everywhere, “Tomorrow is *ekādaśī*. All of you please observe it.” The new queen heard this and told her husband, “What is this silly thing? What is *ekādaśī*? I will not follow it, and you should also not follow it. A king should be smart and strong, and if you fast, then you will be too weak to control the kingdom.”

The king replied, “I cannot give up *ekādaśī*. I must observe it, and I am asking you to try to observe it.” She said, “I am calling all the *brāhmaṇas*, and if they say that the king should observe *ekādaśī*, then you can observe it. If they say that there are no rules and regulations in *śāstra* for a king or ruler to observe *ekādaśī*, then you will have to give it up.” He agreed, “Yes, invite them.”

All the *brāhmaṇas* came, but she had bribed them the night before. Especially in Kali-yuga, *brāhmaṇas* have become very greedy. They will give up their brahminical principles even if you give them a few Indian rupees. These *brāhmaṇas* were also greedy, and because they were given so many golden coins, they declared, “A King should not observe *ekādaśī*. Everywhere in *śāstra*—in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and the *Purāṇas*—it is said that

ekādaśī is only for widows, for those who are old and cannot digest or sit properly, and for those who are going to die and have nothing to do. A married lady whose husband is alive should not follow it, and little boys and girls also should not follow it. Only widows should follow it. For rulers, for a king like you, there is no need to follow *ekādaśī*.” That girl became so happy and said, “You should follow the *brāhmaṇas*.”

The king argued, “None of them are true *brāhmaṇas*. I will not follow them. I know they are greedy, and they don’t know scripture.” She replied, “I am going to give you up and return to my father.” The king agreed, “You can go, no harm.”

When that new queen was ready to leave, the first queen came, fell at her feet, and asked, “Why are you doing this? You are my sister, so I would like to give you a good suggestion. Try to obey your husband. He has been following *ekādaśī* since his childhood, and cannot give it up.”

The girl replied, “I can obey, but on one condition. If you and the king will kill your son and give his head to me on a golden plate as a gift, I will then allow the king to observe *ekādaśī*.”

Hearing this, the king replied, “I don’t want a wife like her. She should go away.”

Happy to hear the girl’s condition, the first wife told the king, “I am your good wife, so please obey me also. After ten, twenty, or a hundred years my son will die. So if we make this sacrifice in relation to following *ekādaśī*, we will be the ideal example for the entire world, for all time. It is so auspicious to be able to offer the life of our son for the glories of *ekādaśī*; besides this, we can easily obtain another son. So please accept her proposal, and thus there will be no need to send your Mohinī away.”

The son said to his father, “I am very fortunate to have the opportunity to offer my life for the glories of *ekādaśī*; please, dear father, grant me this golden opportunity.”

Somehow, his first wife pacified him and he prepared himself. The son now became happy, thinking, “My life is successful because I am serving my father and mother. In fact, I am serving two mothers.”

When the father and mother went to cut off the son’s head, that

girl suddenly changed into a deity, and Dharmarāja, a manifestation of Kṛṣṇa, appeared there. Holding up his hand, he said, “Don’t do this. I sent this girl to test you, and you have passed the examination.”

That girl then declared, “I want one thing- if anyone eats grains on *ekādaśī*, or eats more than he should, the fruit of his good activities (*karma*) will go to me; I will gain that. If anyone eats grains on *ekādaśī*, all kinds of sinful reactions will enter that person, and all of his good *karma* will go to me.” That girl was Mohinī-devī.

We are not realizing the fact of how gainful it is to follow *ekādaśī*. *Ekādaśī* is the mother of *bhakti*. If anyone observes *ekādaśī* in the right way, *bhakti* will come automatically. Whether one is a Vaiṣṇava or not, if he observes *ekādaśī*, surely he will advance in *bhakti* and become happy.

Therefore, on *ekādaśī*, by all the *ekādaśa* (eleven) senses, we can engage in:

***śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ smaraṇam pāda-sevanam
arcanaṁ vandanaṁ dāsyā sakhyam ātma-nivedanam***

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 7.5.23)

[Prahāda Mahārāja said: “Hearing and chanting about the transcendental holy name, form, qualities, paraphernalia and pastimes of Lord Viṣṇu, remembering them, serving the lotus feet of the Lord, offering the Lord respectful worship with sixteen types of paraphernalia, offering prayers to the Lord, becoming His servant, considering the Lord one’s best friend, and surrendering everything unto Him (in other words, serving Him with the body, mind, and words)—these nine processes are accepted as pure devotional service.”]

One can practice the sixty-four kinds of *bhakti* on *ekādaśī*, thinking, “I will take leave from my office and worldly affairs. In the morning I will perform *ārati*. All day and night I will not engage in any worldly activities or eat any grains. I will constantly read and hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.” Certainly, he will gain from this.

One day in India I saw that a cow was dying, but its soul was not leaving its body. Its stomach was swollen, its eyes were full of tears, and it was so sad. Many persons were looking on, but not doing anything. An elderly lady-disciple of mine was passing by and saw

that cow. Weeping, she at once went to me and asked, “This cow is not dying and not living- what should I do?” I replied, “Have you followed many *ekādaśīs*?” She said, “Yes, so many.” I asked, “How many?” She replied, “Since childhood I have been fully fasting on *ekādaśī*, and also not sleeping at night.” In Mathurā, even little boys and girls fast fully, taking no water, grains, or anything else.

I asked, “Can you give the fruit of one of your *ekādaśīs* to that cow?” She replied, “Oh, surely.”

I said, “Say in that cow’s ear, ‘O mother cow, I am giving the fruit of one of my *ekādaśīs* to you. Please take it.’” As soon as she did that, the cow looked towards her and then immediately left its body. All were in wonder, thinking, “Oh, how quickly it has been done.”

She also chanted to that cow: “Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare,” and put Tulasī leaves and Gaṅgā water in its mouth.

You should all have faith like this.

It Is Not A Day—It Is Kṛṣṇa

Today is *ekādaśī*, a very auspicious day. In this regard, let us remember the history of Ambarīṣa Mahārāja and Durvāsā Ṛṣi.⁹ There

9 "Mahārāja Ambarīṣa was the emperor of the entire world, but he considered his opulence temporary. Indeed, knowing that such material opulence is the cause of downfall into conditional life, he was unattached to this opulence. He engaged his senses and mind in the service of the Lord. This process is called *yukta-vairāgya*, or feasible renunciation, which is quite suitable for worship of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Because Mahārāja Ambarīṣa, as the emperor, was immensely opulent, he performed devotional service with great opulence. Therefore, despite his wealth, he had no attachment to his wife, children or kingdom. He constantly engaged his senses and mind in the service of the Lord. Therefore, to say nothing of enjoying material opulence, he never desired even liberation.

"Once Mahārāja Ambarīṣa was worshiping the Supreme Personality of Godhead in Vṛndāvana, observing the vow of *dvādaśī*. On *dvādaśī*, the day after *ekādaśī*, when he was about to break his *ekādaśī* fast, the great mystic yogi Durvāsā appeared in his house and became his guest. King Ambarīṣa respectfully received Durvāsā Muni, and Durvāsā Muni, after accepting his invitation to eat there, went to bathe in the Yamunā River at noontime.

are so many things to learn from this history—first to learn, then to practice, and then to realize.

What is the speciality of today that gives it the name *ekādaśī*? It is the eleventh day from the dark moon day (Amāvasyā) and from the full moon day (Pūrṇimā). We have eleven senses—five working senses and five knowledge-acquiring senses. That makes ten, and the mind is the eleventh. With these eleven senses we should try to

Because he was absorbed in *samādhi*, he did not come back very soon. Mahārāja Ambarīṣa, however, upon seeing that the time to break the fast was passing, drank a little water, in accordance with the advice of learned brāhmaṇas, just to observe the formality of breaking the fast.

"By mystic power, Durvāsā Muni could understand that this had happened, and he was very angry. When he returned he began to chastise Mahārāja Ambarīṣa, but he was not satisfied, and finally he created from his hair a demon appearing like the fire of death. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, however, is always the protector of His devotee, and to protect Mahārāja Ambarīṣa, He sent His disc, the Sudarśana-cakra, which immediately vanquished the fiery demon and then pursued Durvāsā, who was so envious of Mahārāja Ambarīṣa.

"Durvāsā fled to Brahmaloka, Śivaloka and all the other higher planets, but he could not protect himself from the wrath of the Sudarśana-cakra. Finally he went to the spiritual world and surrendered to Lord Nārāyaṇa, but Lord Nārāyaṇa could not excuse a person who had offended a Vaiṣṇava. To be excused from such an offense, one must submit to the Vaiṣṇava whom he has offended. There is no other way to be excused. Thus Lord Nārāyaṇa advised Durvāsā to return to Mahārāja Ambarīṣa and beg his pardon.

"By the order of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Viṣṇu, Durvāsā Muni immediately went to Mahārāja Ambarīṣa and fell at his lotus feet. Mahārāja Ambarīṣa, being naturally very humble and meek, felt shy and ashamed because Durvāsā Muni had fallen at his feet, and thus he began to offer prayers to the Sudarśana-cakra just to save Durvāsā.

"What is this Sudarśana-cakra? The Sudarśana-cakra is the glance of the Supreme Personality of Godhead by which He creates the entire material world. *Sa aikṣata, sa asṛjata*. This is the Vedic version. The Sudarśana-cakra, which is the origin of creation and is most dear to the Lord, has thousands of spokes. This Sudarśana-cakra is the killer of the prowess of all other weapons, the killer of darkness, and the manifestor of the prowess of devotional service; it is the means of establishing religious principles, and it is the killer of all irreligious activities.

"Without his mercy, the universe cannot be maintained, and therefore the Sudarśana-cakra is employed by the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

"When Mahārāja Ambarīṣa thus prayed that the Sudarśana-cakra be

become nearer to Kṛṣṇa. *Ekādaśī* means that by our eleven senses we do *upavāsa*. *Upa* means ‘very near’, and *vāsa* means ‘to reside.’ On *ekādaśī*, we should try to somehow be nearer to Kṛṣṇa, with our entire mind and body, and with all our senses.

Not following *ekādaśī* will be harmful to us. On *ekādaśī* the moon comes closer to the Earth, and therefore it attracts water from everywhere—the seas, rivers, our bodies, and so on. If one takes any grains on this day, the grains become like blotting paper. If you drink water, it will very soon pass from the body. However, if you take grains and water together, the grains become like blotting paper or cotton—grains hold the water.

Even if you squeeze the cotton, some water will remain. Similarly, if you eat any grain, it becomes like a sponge. It will hold a lot of water. The moon will attract that water, and all your diseases will increase. You can see this in the sea or ocean. At this time there are high tides and the waves become very high.

Similarly, it is like this in our bodies. If a person already has some disease, his disease increases from *ekādaśī* to Pūrṇimā and *ekādaśī* to Amāvasyā. We have tested this in hospitals, and we see that of those who die in hospitals, most of them die on these days.

Control your eating on *ekādaśī*, and do not take grains. It is better to perform *nirjalā*, complete fasting, with no water. Today in India, so many people observe *nirjalā-ekādaśī*—even young boys, and even when the temperature outside is forty-eight degrees

merciful, the Sudarśana-cakra, being appeased, refrained from killing Durvāsā Muni, who thus achieved the Sudarśana-cakra’s mercy. Durvāsā Muni thus learned to give up the nasty idea of considering a Vaiṣṇava an ordinary person (*vaiṣṇave jāti-buddhi*). Mahārāja Ambarīṣa belonged to the *kṣatriya* group, and therefore Durvāsā Muni considered him lower than the *brāhmaṇas* and wanted to exercise brahminical power against him.

“By this incident, everyone should learn how to stop mischievous ideas of neglecting Vaiṣṇavas. After this incident, Mahārāja Ambarīṣa gave Durvāsā Muni sumptuous food to eat, and then the king, who had been standing in the same place for one year without eating anything, also took *prasāda*. Mahārāja Ambarīṣa later divided his property among his sons and went to the bank of Mānasa-sarovara to execute devotional meditation.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Canto 9 Chapter 4 Summary, and Canto 9 Chapter 5 Summary by Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja)]

Celsius. Still these people observe *nirjalā*. No harm at all comes to such persons by this; rather, this fasting removes all diseases.

Be careful to observe *ekādaśī* in such a way that you will become nearer to Kṛṣṇa—to Kṛṣṇa and to those personalities and things related to the Lord. This includes Tulasī, Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Vṛndāvana, Girirāja, and any temple of Śrī-Srī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Mostly it refers to His pure devotees—the *rasika* and *tattva-jña uttama-adhikārīs* (first-class, pure devotees), and even to *madhyama-adhikārīs* (intermediate devotees). If you associate with them by living in Vṛndāvana near the Tulasī plant, in Purī-*dhāma* where Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu resided for some time, or in Śrī Govinda Temple, Śrī Gopīnātha Temple, or other temples, and if you pray and hear *hari-kathā*, you will become nearer to Kṛṣṇa. This is called *upa* (near)-*vāsa* (residing). Try not to do any worldly activities on *ekādaśī*.

We should utilize at least one day in two weeks to be closer to Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and in that way we will not lose our *bhakti*. Your *bhakti* will certainly increase by Their association, and therefore Kṛṣṇa has arranged this opportunity—He Himself has become *ekādaśī*. In the form of *ekādaśī*, He invites us: “Today you should give your eleven senses to Me.” This is a very good thing—Kṛṣṇa has become *ekādaśī*—so we should try to observe it.

Kṛṣṇa called His *cakra* and ordered it to go to Śiśupāla, and in one second that *cakra* cut off Śiśupāla’s head. In the Vedic scriptures we see that whenever Kṛṣṇa takes His *cakra* and throws it, it cuts off someone’s head in a second. Why, then, did the *cakra* pursue Durvāsā, who was quickly running away from it, for one entire year, and still not reach him to cut off his head? Why? What is the reason? Why did the *cakra* not cutoff his head? It did not do so even after one minute, two minutes, three minutes, one hour, two hours, or one month. It still did not do so after nearly one entire year. Why did it continue to remain two fingers away from him? What is the reason?

[Devotee:] Because Ambarīṣa Mahārāja was praying to Lord Viṣṇu for the benediction that nothing should harm Durvāsā.

[Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja:] No, this is not the reason. Ambarīṣa Mahārāja can never be opposed to Kṛṣṇa’s will. If Nārāyaṇa or Kṛṣṇa throws the Sudarśana-*cakra*, it must cut off a person’s head.

Sudarśana-*cakra* is not only a weapon. The word ‘Sudarśana’ means ‘auspicious vision’. By connection with that auspicious vision one will not die. He will not be destroyed by having his head cut off, or by any other means.

Durvāsā Rṣi is a pure Vaiṣṇava; he is a manifestation of Śaṅkara, Lord Śiva. He is the greatest of all Vaiṣṇavas (*vaiṣṇavānām yathā śambhuḥ*)¹⁰.

He wanted to glorify *bhakti* (pure devotion to Kṛṣṇa) and the power of the devotees of Kṛṣṇa—in an indirect way. He can give any benediction to anyone, and he even gave a benediction to Śrīmatī Rādhikā. Rādhikā received from him the benediction that whatever She cooked would be sweeter than nectar, and that is the special feature of Her cooking.

How is it possible for a person who wanted to glorify *bhakti* and Kṛṣṇa to be opposed to a person like Ambarīṣa Mahārāja? Durvāsā Rṣi is a high-class *brāhmaṇa* and a *yogī*, and he is immortal. He lives in Brahma-loka¹¹, not on this Earth planet.

10 *nimna-gānām yathā gaṅgā devānām acyuto yathā
vaiṣṇavānām yathā śambhuḥ purāṇānām idaṁ tathā*

“Just as the Gaṅgā is the greatest of all rivers, Lord Acyuta the supreme among deities and Lord Śambhu (Śiva) the greatest of Vaiṣṇavas, so *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the greatest of all *Purāṇas*.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 12.13.16)]

11 Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued: Thus being satisfied in all respects, the great mystic *yogī* Durvāsā took permission and left, continuously glorifying the king. Through the skyways, he went to Brahmaloka, which is devoid of agnostics and dry philosophical speculators.

PURPORT (by Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja): Although Durvāsā Muni went back to Brahmaloka through the space-ways, he did not need an airplane, for great mystic *yogis* can transport themselves from any planet to any other without any machine. There is a planet named Siddhaloka whose inhabitants can go to any other planet because they naturally have all the perfection of *yoga* practice. Thus Durvāsā Muni, the great mystic *yogī*, could go through the skyways to any planet, even to Brahmaloka. In Brahmaloka, everyone is self-realized, and thus there is no need of philosophical speculation to come to the conclusion of the Absolute Truth. Durvāsā Muni’s purpose in going to Brahmaloka was apparently to speak to the residents of Brahmaloka about how powerful a devotee is and how a devotee can surpass every living entity within this material world. The so-called *jñānīs* and *yogīs* cannot compare to a devotee. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 9.5.22)]

Mahārāja Ambarīṣa was always chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Govinda Dāmodara Mādhaveti, and other devotional hymns (*kīrtanas*). He was very simple. He used to personally perform many services, such as collecting flowers and making garlands for Kṛṣṇa in the form of the Deity. Regarding the control and maintenance of his kingdom, he gave that job to his ministers. No one could realize that he was such a high-class devotee.

A devotee who always purely chants Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa while doing his worldly job and maintaining his life is greater than any *yogī* or *brahma-jñānī* (one who has realized the impersonal feature of the Supreme Lord) like Durvāsā. He may not have attained his spiritual position, but still he is so much higher than any *brahma-jñānī*.

Sudarśana-*cakra* thought, “Durvāsā is also my devotee. He wants to glorify bhakti, the Lord’s devotee, and the Supreme Lord Himself. Since he is going to glorify them in an indirect way, I will also act in an indirect way. I will not cut off his head, but I will pursue him. I will do this in order to create fear in all those who are against the Lord’s devotees. They will understand that Sudarśana-*cakra* always protects all devotees, like Prahlāda Mahārāja, Gajendra, and others.”

Ambarīṣa Mahārāja was thinking, “What shall I do? On the one hand, if I drink *caraṇāmṛta* (water that has bathed the Deity of the Lord), I will be neglecting that *brāhmaṇa-yogī*, but on the other hand, I must consider *ekādaśī*. If I do not properly observe *ekādaśī* (which includes concluding it by honoring the Lord’s *prasāda* at the proper time the next day), that means I am neglecting *ekādaśī*. What is more harmful—to disobey a *brāhmaṇa* or to disobey *bhakti*?”

He concluded, “I may disobey thousands upon thousands of *brāhmaṇas* like this *brahma-jñānī-yogī*, but I cannot disobey the holy name or *ekādaśī*.”

The Vaiṣṇavas utter this prayer before honoring *mahā-prasāda*, the remnants of the Lord’s foodstuffs:

***mahā-prasāde govinde, nāma-brahmaṇi vaiṣṇave,
svalpa-puṇya-vatām rājan, viśvāso naiva jāyate***

“Those who have very few pious activities to their credit can never develop faith in *mahā-prasāda*, in Śrī Govinda, in the holy name of the Lord, or in the Vaiṣṇavas.” [from *Skanda Purāṇa*,

quoted in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Antya-līlā*, 16.96 purport]

We cannot disobey *harināma* or *ekādaśī*. *Ekādaśī* is the mother of devotion. If you observe *ekādaśī*, *bhakti* will surely come. It may seem like a very ordinary thing, but it is not ordinary at all.

Mahārāja Ambarīṣa took some *caraṇāmṛta*, which was not *pāraṇa* (breaking the fast) and also *pāraṇa* at the same time, because this water is not like a grain or a food. When one observes *nirjalā ekādaśī* (fasting even from water), if one drinks water the next day at the specified time for breaking the fast, then that water is also considered *pāraṇa*. Otherwise, if one takes fruits and water on *ekādaśī*, he will have to break the fast with a grain. Mahārāja Ambarīṣa was observing *nirjalā* for three days. On the first day he drank water one time, on the last day (*dvādaśī*, the day after *ekādaśī*) one time, and in between, for the entire *ekādaśī* day, he did *nirjalā*. He did not sleep at night—not even for a moment. Rather, he was always chanting and remembering Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s name and glories. This is the process of *ekādaśī*.

We are not qualified like Mahārāja Ambarīṣa, so Kṛṣṇa has given us some concessions, and Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja has also given more concessions to us. You can take fruit, milk, and curd—there is no harm in that—but observe *ekādaśī*. Don’t take grains. Try to have one meal during the day. If you are not able, you can eat two times, but not three, four, five, or six times. Don’t take one kilo of juice, *rabrī* (an Indian sweet), one kilo of mango, fruit juice, orange juice, and after that apple juice, not giving a rest to your stomach—always eating. We should not do this. One or two meals is sufficient, and each time one should take only enough *prasāda* to half-fill the stomach. Half the stomach should remain empty. Take very little; then, it is *ekādaśī*.

Ekādaśī Can Fulfill All Desires

Houston, Texas: around 2001

You know how delicious Jagannātha *prasāda* is. The *paṇḍās* (priests) of Jagannātha’s temple brought some *prasāda* to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who was performing *kīrtana* with His associates: Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare.

In general, the *paṇḍās* and others in Jagannātha Purī don't observe *ekādaśī*. They think they have 'tightened the legs of *Ekādaśī-devī* and tied her upside-down on the branch of a tree' so that no one would have to observe *ekādaśī*. They say, "It is the glory of *mahā-prasāda* that even on *ekādaśī*, *Janmāṣṭamī*, and *Rāmanavamī*, you have no need of special fasting. You can take *prasāda*, and after that you can take betel-nut, and sometimes cigarettes; no harm. Just go on chanting, 'Jagannātha, Jagannātha, Jaya Jagannātha.'"

The *paṇḍās* considered, "If the Gauḍīya *bhaktas* from Bengal and Vaiṣṇavas from other parts of India come here on *ekādaśī*, then our *mahā-prasāda* will not sell and our business will go down. Also, if all of them observe *ekādaśī* and we do not, they will laugh at us."

For these reasons the *paṇḍās* offered Mahāprabhu Jagannātha's *mahā-prasāda* on *ekādaśī*. They thought that He would be in a dilemma, and would then take it.

What did Mahāprabhu do? He said, "We should not dishonor *mahā-prasāda*, nor should we dishonor *ekādaśī*." Then, He performed *kīrtana* with all of His devotees. For the entire night, He offered *daṇḍavat praṇāmas* and prayers from the *Vedas*, *Upaniṣads*, *Purāṇas*, and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to the *mahā-prasāda*.

Mahā-prasāda is Kṛṣṇa Himself:

***mahā-prasāde govinde, nāma-brahmaṇi vaiṣṇave,
svalpa-puṇya-vatām rājan, viśvāso naiva jāyate***

"Those who have very few pious activities to their credit can never develop faith in *mahā-prasāda*, in Śrī Govinda, in the holy name of the Lord, or in the Vaiṣṇavas." (*Skanda Purāṇa*)

Those who are not fortunate cannot honor *mahā-prasāda* with the understanding that it is Govinda Himself, as they cannot understand that Kṛṣṇa has invested all of His power, opulence, mercy, and everything else in His name. The holy name of Kṛṣṇa is Kṛṣṇa Himself; *mahā-prasāda* is Kṛṣṇa Himself; and the pure Vaiṣṇavas are non-different from Kṛṣṇa. There is a special power in them; we should not neglect them.

Mahāprabhu spent His entire night in such glorification. Then, at 4:00AM He went to *Svarga-dvāra*, the ocean. He took bath there, returned home, performed *ācamana*, put on *tilaka*, and did *āhnikā*.

He did this even though He is Kṛṣṇa Himself. Why did He always think about Kṛṣṇa? His heart is that of Rādhikā, so all He could think about was Kṛṣṇa.

After performing His morning duties, He offered *praṇāma* and took *prasāda*, and then went for *darśana* of Jagannātha, Baladeva, and Subhadrā. However, He did not see them; rather, He saw only Vrajendra-nandana. When He was just about to faint, He was caught by Candaneśvara, the son of Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya. Sārvabhauma had told his son, “Always go to the Jagannātha temple with Mahāprabhu, and when He is about to faint, protect Him from falling.”

We should try to observe *ekādaśī* in this way—not taking water, juice, fruit, or milk many times. If you are young and healthy, you can go the whole day and night without taking anything—even water. If you cannot do this, you can eat or drink once in the afternoon or evening. If you are sick or weak, you can eat a little twice a day to maintain your life so that you can chant, “Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa.”

More concessions have been given for Western devotees because some are weaker in body. Others are very strong. I have seen many Western devotees, especially ladies, fast the entire day and night without sleeping.

There are so many benefits from observing *ekādaśī*. In colleges, hospitals, and various places of work, we see that leave is given once a week for students and workers so that they can take rest, and the next day they can work with full energy. Otherwise, they would not be able to continue their activities over the years. They must take some rest.

This is also true regarding our stomach. There are bacteria in our stomach that are helpful for our health. These bacteria are always working for our digestion, so if they become sick or tired, you will become sick. We should try to give them rest for at least one day so that the next day they will work again with great energy.

Secondly, you see that in the ocean, especially from *ekādaśī* to Pūrṇimā, there are very large waves. This is because the moon attracts all the waters of this planet. Wherever there is water, the moon attracts it. In our body there is much water, and especially on *ekādaśī* the moon attracts it. If there is any disease, it will greatly

increase. It is best that we avoid these things, especially grains, corn, wheat, and food made with them.

It has been said that sometimes you can take water; there is no harm in that. If you put water on a stone, the stone will at once become dry again; all of the water will disappear. On the other hand, if you pour water on some cotton or blotting paper, it will soak up the water and take hours to dry.

Preparations made from grains, wheat, rice, corn, and *dhāl* are like cotton in our stomach. The moon attracts the water in them and diseases increase. Many people die in hospitals from *ekādaśī* to the full moon and *ekādaśī* to the new moon. It is essential to follow *ekādaśī* to control our diseases.

[From Gurudeva's June 5, 1998 lecture on *ekādaśī*: On *ekādaśī*, the moon comes closer to the Earth, and therefore it attracts water from everywhere—the seas, rivers, our bodies, and so on. If one takes grains on this day, they become like blotting paper. If you drink water, it very soon passes from the body. However, if you take grains and water together, the grains become like blotting paper or cotton—grains hold the water.

Even if you squeeze the cotton, some water remains. Similarly, if you eat grain, it becomes like a sponge. It will hold a lot of water. The moon will attract that water, and all of your diseases will increase. You can see this in the sea or ocean; at this time there are high tides and the waves become very high.]

These are external reasons—for the body. I have said this for those who are attached to their bodies.

Even persons who do not believe in God should observe *ekādaśī*. In India, all kinds of devotees follow *ekādaśī-Māyāvādīs* (impersonalists), *Śaivas* (worshipers of Lord Śiva), *Śāktas* (worshipers of Durgā-devī), and Gaṇeśa worshipers. Ladies, men, and children follow it, but nowadays this is decreasing. Almost everyone is avoiding *ekādaśī*; it is as if a very big storm from the Western countries went to India and affected it everywhere.

In ancient times there was a king named Ambarīṣa Mahārāja, and he was in a dilemma regarding whether *ekādaśī* should be fully observed.

There was a very high-class *brahma-vādī* named Durvāsā Muni

who could fly and go to Brahmaloḥa and everywhere else. He could disappear and take any form. Whatever he ordered would happen. He could curse someone by saying, “Oh, you should die at once,” and that person would die. He was a very angry person.

Durvāsā went to the palace of Ambarīṣa Mahārāja, and Ambarīṣa Mahārāja requested, “Please take *prasāda* here today, because it is *dvādaśī* today, *pāraṇa* day.” [On *dvādaśī* day, the day following the *ekādaśī* fast, the fast is broken and the *ekādaśī* observance is completed by taking *pāraṇa* during a prescribed time period. -editors]

Durvāsā said, “I will return very soon. I am going to the nearby Yamunā River to take bath and do some other things, and then I will return.”

He went and then intentionally delayed going back. Before he returned, only a few minutes remained before the *pāraṇa* time would expire. Ambarīṣa Mahārāja thought, “What shall I do? On the one hand, if I take *pāraṇa* I will dishonor that *mahā-mahā-brahma-vādī*, and on the other hand, if I honor that *brahma-jñānī* I will dishonor *ekādaśī*.”

If one observes *ekādaśī* without taking water, but does not take *pāraṇa* in time, the fruits from *ekādaśī* go away. Therefore, Ambarīṣa Mahārāja wondered what to do. At last he decided, “Let the *brahma-vādī* be angry; no harm. He will curse me, saying, ‘You should die’—no harm. In my next birth I will again be okay. On the other hand, if I dishonor *ekādaśī* by not taking *pāraṇa* at the proper time, my *bhakti* will go away. I will dishonor Kṛṣṇa Himself, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and I will be ruined forever. If my *bhakti* leaves, what will be the use of honoring *brahma-vādīs* and doing other things? I should not dishonor *bhakti*.”

He then took *caraṇāmṛta* (water used to bath his Deity). He did not take Tulasī leaves because he had done *nirjalā*, a full fast, on the previous day. If he had not done *nirjalā*, then water would not have been sufficient to observe the *pāraṇa*. He would have had to take grain or something similar. He took only one drop of *caraṇāmṛta* to observe *pāraṇa*.

That Ṛṣi then returned. Knowing by his trance that Ambarīṣa Mahārāja had taken the *caraṇāmṛta*, Durvāsā cursed him. He took a

hair from his dread-locks and said, “You should become fire.” At once that hair became a big, powerful fire demon named Kṛtyā, who was a *rākṣasī*, or man-eating demon. The fire demon asked Durvāsā, “What do you want me to do?” The Ṛṣi replied, “Oh, you should at once burn Ambarīṣa Mahārāja to ashes! He is inimical to *brahma-jñānī ṛṣis*! He doesn’t know how to honor me!” Kṛtyā immediately attacked, but Kṛṣṇa’s Sudarśana-*cakra*, His ultimate disc-weapon, went to protect His devotee.

We have no faith in Kṛṣṇa’s protection, or perhaps just a little—a shadow. We do not really believe that Kṛṣṇa or His *cakra* will come to save us. Sudarśana is always here and there. He never destroys anyone; rather, he gives *su-darśana*, a light by which you can see Kṛṣṇa. He is always saving devotees everywhere, because he can go everywhere.

Sudarśana had been observing Durvāsā Ṛṣi and Ambarīṣa Mahārāja, and suddenly he appeared. In a moment he burned that fire demon to ashes, and then he began to pursue Durvāsā Ṛṣi.

Why did he follow Durvāsā? He can fly faster than Durvāsā, so why did he not catch and destroy him? Why did he only continue chasing him? It is because Durvāsā Muni was actually Śaṅkara, and Śaṅkara is a *bhakta*. The apparently demonic behavior of Durvāsā Muni was only to glorify Ambarīṣa Mahārāja. Durvāsā is actually a high-class devotee. He is Śaṅkara. The *cakra* was following him only to make a show—to make a pastime in order to glorify Ambarīṣa Mahārāja and *ekādaśī*. Actually, even Śaṅkara cannot escape Sudarśana-*cakra*; he could have been burned by it. However, Śaṅkara is a manifestation of Kṛṣṇa; in Brahmaloḥa he is Sadāśiva, Viṣṇu-tattva. Knowing this, Sudarśana-*cakra* only chased him.

Durvāsā Ṛṣi first went to the planet of his father, Brahmā, who refused to help him. He then went to the planet of Lord Śiva, but Śiva (Śaṅkara) also refused. Finally, he approached Lord Viṣṇu, who also refused, saying, “I am not independent; I am dependent on My *bhaktas*.”

If one gets a thorn stuck in his foot, that thorn cannot be removed from his head; it must be removed from his foot. Viṣṇu told Durvāsā Ṛṣi, “*Bhaktas* are My feet and My heart. I cannot save you. Go back to Ambarīṣa Mahārāja, and if he accepts and forgives you, then you

will be okay.”

Durvāsā Ṛṣi immediately returned to Earth, to the palace of Ambarīṣa Mahārāja. He fell flat at the feet of Ambarīṣa Mahārāja and prayed: “Oh, please forgive me.” Ambarīṣa replied, “You should forgive me. It was because of me that Sudarśana-*cakra* chased you everywhere and made you suffer. First, take *prasāda*, and then we will discuss whatever you like.” Mahārāja Ambarīṣa then served delicious *prasāda* to Durvāsā Ṛṣi, who realized the glory of Ambarīṣa Mahārāja.

***aho ananta-dāsānām mahattvaṁ dṛṣṭam adya me
kṛtāgaso 'pi yad rājan maṅgalāni samīhase***

“My dear king, today I have experienced the greatness of a Vaiṣṇava, for although I have committed a grievous offense by trying to kill you, you have prayed for my protection and well being.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 9.4.68)

Durvāsā Ṛṣi said, “Today, I have seen how glorious the Vaiṣṇavas are; I must observe *ekādaśī* to become a devotee like you.”

If you want to become a devotee like Ambarīṣa Mahārāja, or like the parents of Kṛṣṇa, Nanda and Yaśodā, then you must follow *ekādaśī*. Nanda and Yaśodā followed *ekādaśī* in Vṛndāvana, and from Vṛndāvana they went to *Ambikā-kānana* near Mathurā and followed it there. If they did this, shouldn't we? We must observe *ekādaśī*, and with care. Then, *bhakti* will come to us automatically.

We must follow *ekādaśī* under the guidance of pure Vaiṣṇavas, and also perform *kīrtana* under such guidance. It is okay if one does *bhakti*, but if he is under the guidance of a devotee who has a relation with Vraja—who has *vraja-bhakti* and is *rasika*, knowing all *tattvas*—that pure devotee can remove all doubts and put Rādhā, Kṛṣṇa, and Mahāprabhu in his heart. Always be in Vṛndāvana under the guidance of this caliber of Vaiṣṇava, and always chant and remember. At the same time, chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa and remember the pastimes related to that name.



**Durvāsā Muni prays to Ambarīṣa Mahārāja
to save him from Kṛṣṇa's Sudarśana-cakra**

For example, if you sing “Govinda Dāmodara Mādhaveti”, you can remember the pastimes of Govinda. When the demigod Indra sent torrential rains, Kṛṣṇa held up Girirāja Mountain for seven days to protect the residents of Vṛndāvana. After those seven days, Indra realized that he had committed a great offense at Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. He went to Kṛṣṇa with his elephant and Surabhi cow. He performed Kṛṣṇa's *abhiṣeka* (sacred bathing ceremony) and then said, “You are the protector of *go* (cows), *gopas* (cowherd men and boys), *gopīs* (cowherd women and girls), *govatsa* (calves), the land, and all of the other residents of Gokula. So, it is appropriate that Your name is Govinda.” You can remember this pastime, for example.

You can also remember the pastimes of Dāmodara. You can remember the pastime of Yaśodā binding Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa weeping: “Mother, Mother, don't beat Me!”

Once, Śrīmatī Rādhikā and the *gopīs* were sitting with Kṛṣṇa. Lalitā took a corner of Śrīmatī Rādhikā's veil and a corner of Kṛṣṇa's *pītāmbara*, and tied the two together. Then, all of the *gopīs* began to sing the *kīrtanas* of marriage, and Viśākhā acted as the priest. When Rādhikā realized what was happening, She started to run away, but Kṛṣṇa was bound to Her. The *gopīs* bound Kṛṣṇa so that He could not leave Śrīmatī Rādhikā; He would always be with Her. In this way, He is Rādhā-Dāmodara.

We remember Rādhā-Dāmodara. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī established the Deity of Rādhā-Dāmodara, not Yaśodā-Dāmodara. Yaśodā-Dāmodara is only a part of Rādhā-Dāmodara. We should remember and chant like this, and always think, "We are in Vṛndāvana with the Vrajavāsīs."

Also, when you chant you can remember the following verses:

***jayatām suratau paṅgor mama manda-mater gati
mat-sarvasva-padāmbhojau rādhā-madana-mohanau***

"All glories to the all-merciful Śrī Rādhā-Madana-Mohana! Although I am lame, foolish and devoid of intelligence, Your lotus feet are my refuge and my everything!" (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Ādi-līlā, 1.15)

***dīvyad-vṛndāraṇya-kalpa-drumādhaḥ
śrīmad ratnāgāra-simhāsana-sthau
śrī-śrī-rādhā-śrīla-govinda-devau
preṣṭhālībhiḥ sevyamānau smarāmi***

"I meditate upon Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda-deva, who are seated beneath a *kalpa-vṛkṣa* tree on an effulgent bejeweled *simhāsana* in the supremely beautiful land of Vṛndāvana, where They are always being served by Their beloved *sakhīs*, headed by Lalitā and Viśākhā." (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Ādi-līlā, 1.16)

You can remember the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa surrounded by all of the *gopīs*.

When you chant the following verse, you can remember Kṛṣṇa as Gopīnātha under the shade of Vamśī-vaṭa.

***śrīmān rāsa-rasārambhī vamśīvaṭa-taṭa-sthitaḥ
karṣan veṇu-svanair gopīr gopīnāthaḥ śrīye'stu naḥ***

"Śrī Gopīnātha, who originated the transcendental mellow of the *rāsa* dance, always stands beneath the Vamśī-vaṭa tree, attracting all

the *kiśorī-gopīs* with the sound of His flute, thereby showering me with auspiciousness." (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Ādi-līlā, 1.17)

Our *ekādaśī* will be observed well when we are chanting and remembering, and thinking that we are in *Sevā-kuñja* or under the shade of *Vaṁśī-vaṭa*, especially under the guidance of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī.

Śyāmarāṇī dāśī: Gurudeva, we always hear that we should not take grains on *ekādaśī* because sins are stored in them on that day, but why can we not take certain vegetables, like tomato and *laukī*?

Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja: It is not like with grains. They do not have the qualities of grain, corn, wheat, and *dahl* [in that they don't act like blotting paper or a ball of cotton]. We know from a special story that on the day of *ekādaśī*, all sins, including *brahma-hatyā* (the killing of a *brāhmaṇa*), *māṭṛ-hatyā* (the killing of one's mother), and *go-hatyā* (the killing of a cow) take shelter in grains and in things prepared with grains. In addition, *śāstra* prohibits eating certain vegetables and other foodstuffs. (**Note:** Scriptures like *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* state that such foodstuffs create changes in the body and consciousness that are detrimental to the observance of *ekādaśī*. Sinful reactions don't take shelter in foodstuffs other than grains and beans. Scriptures like *Manu-saṁhitā* and *Manu-smṛiti* state that certain foodstuffs are prohibited on *ekādaśī* because they change their qualities on that day, and thus their ingestion creates disturbances in the consciousness.)

A concession has been made for the Western devotees, and in India for weak persons. If you are not observing the rules and prohibitions, then all kinds of sin will come to you, and if you have some *bhakti*, it will be destroyed.

Weak persons can take something, as they like, but it must be within the foodstuffs allowed for *ekādaśī*. Children can also take as they like, but their mother and father should take care that they only eat fruits and other foods allotted for *ekādaśī*.

In evening class, we will discuss how we can develop our Kṛṣṇa consciousness; how we can follow Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the teachings of Rūpa and Raghunātha. We are only here for one day, so how much can I say? If we would be here for seven or ten days, as we are in other cities, then we could speak on several subjects or

themes. No harm, though; I think that all are inspired by hearing this topic today.

My request is: don't be weak. Have great faith in your Guru, your *śikṣā-guru*, devotees, and the pure Name. If you have no taste, then again and again continue to chant, because the Name is Kṛṣṇa Himself. It will give you *darśana* of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is coming to you in the form of *ekādaśī*, in the form of His Name, but you think, "Oh, it is enough to chant in any way" –*lahstom pahstum*– one or two rounds, and without attention. Don't be like this. Kṛṣṇa, His Name, and *ekādaśī* can fulfill all of our desires, and can even give *vraja-prema*.

Wealth cannot save us or solve our problems, but *bhakti* can fulfill all kinds of desires and solve all kinds of problems. Have a very strong belief in the Name, and observe *ekādaśī*, *Janamāṣṭamī*, *Rāma-navamī*, *Nṛsiṃha-caturdaśī*, and Mahāprabhu's birthday. Especially, try to honor devotees. Don't neglect devotees by mind or heart, and don't have any enemies.

Gaura Premānande!

Anu-kalpa

Foods that can be taken on Ekādaśī

All fruits (fresh and dried), all nuts and oils made from nuts. Potatoes, pumpkin, cucumber, radish, squash, lemon, avocado, olives, coconut, buckwheat, all sugars. All pure milk products.

Spices used on Ekādaśī

Black pepper, fresh ginger, pure salt and fresh turmeric, all taken from a new and clean package.

Restricted foods on Ekādaśī

- (1) Tomatoes, eggplants, cauliflower, broccoli, bell *toroi*, *kunli*, drumsticks, *bhiṇḍi* (lady fingers or okra), banana flower.
- (2) Peas, chickpeas and all types of beans, including products made from beans [*pāpaḍa* (wafers), tofu,

tempeh (Indonesian foodstuff made from fermented soya beans; a dish made by frying this), etc.]

- (3) All leafy vegetables: spinach, salads, cabbages, etc., and leafy herbs like parsley, coriander leaves, celery, curry leaves, etc.
- (4) Grains: millet, barley, farina, pasta, rice, corn, etc. all types of flour made from grains and beans (like rice flour, chickpea flour, *urad dahl* flour, etc.)
- (5) Starches from corn or grains, and products made from and mixed with these starches like: baking soda, baking powder, certain soft drinks with corn syrup, custard, certain yogurts, puddings, certain cream & cottage cheeses, certain sweets, candies, tapioca balls, etc.
- (6) Oils made from grains: corn oil, mustard oil, sesame oil, etc., and products fried in these oils: nuts, potato chips and other snack foods.
- (7) Honey and sweets made with starches pepper, beets, bitter melon (*karelā*), *laukī*, *parmal*,.

Spices not used on Ekādaśī

Hing (asafetida), sesame seeds, cumin, fenugreek, mustard, tamarind, fennel, cardamom, nutmeg, etc.

Important Letter about Ekādaśī

Devotees often ask about the proper way to observe ekādaśī in the strictest sense. The following letter is written by Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, at the Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha in Mathurā, India, on July 11, 1993. We hope this will be helpful.

Please accept my hearty blessings. All glories to Śrī Śrī Guru and Gaurāṅga and Śrī Śrī Rādhā Vinoda-vihārī.

I received your letter sent to Navīna Kṛṣṇa Brahmācārī. You have inquired about *nirjalā-ekādaśī* and *cāturmāsya-vratas*. I think you have *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* and you have all read these topics in that book. You have also read in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* about Ambarīṣa Mahārāja who always used to do *nirjalā-ekādaśī*. From *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* and from the example of Ambarīṣa Mahārāja's *vrata*, we

know that on the day before *ekādaśī* we should take *prasāda* only one time, and we should not take any water—even at night. On the second day we should take no water and no *mahā-prasāda*, throughout the entire day and night. We should not sleep. We should observe *brahmacarya*, always chant and hear *hari-kathā*, and we should read *bhakti* books. Also, we should always remember the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, using our eleven *indriyas* (senses) in His service. On the next day, after worshiping the Deities, we can take *pāraṇa*, the remnant food grains of *mahā-prasāda*.

By chance, if Nityānanda Prabhu's or Advaita Ācārya Prabhu's birthday comes on that day (*dvādaśī*), and we want to maintain our *vrata*, we will break the *ekādaśī-vrata* by taking Kṛṣṇa *caraṇāmṛta*. No food grains are to be taken, but on that day we can take water. And on the next day, after worshiping Nityānanda Prabhu or Advaita Ācārya, we will break the *vrata* by remnants of *mahā-prasāda* food grains.

All this has been told for persons who are able to do so. Those who are not able should follow Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja's guidelines.¹² In Kali-yuga, only rare persons can follow, but if anyone wants to follow, that is very good. I have seen generally that our Gurudeva, Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja, Pūjyapāda Śrīdhara Mahārāja, Pūjyapāda Mādhava Mahārāja, Pūjyapāda Bhakti-vilāsa Tīrtha Mahārāja, Pūjyapāda Bhārati Mahārāja, and other respected *ācāryas* did not do *nirjalā* when they became elderly. They used to take milk, curd, fruit juice, boiled potato, plantains, and other vegetables with *ekādaśī* salt. But I have also seen Vaiṣṇavas doing *nirjalā ekādaśī*. You can follow which is suitable to you.

Somehow we should try to remember Kṛṣṇa, along with His associates and His pastimes, throughout the day and night. Don't sleep, and don't be lazy. If anyone does *nirjalā ekādaśī*, but at the same time gets a headache, becomes nervous, becomes lazy, and he does not remember Kṛṣṇa, then there is no use of doing *nirjalā*. Somehow our hearts should always remember Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. The

12 Śrīla Mahārāja has often explained that Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja was dealing in certain ways with beginners, knowing that they would come to stricter standards later on.

main objective of all our activities should be to somehow or other keep our heart always at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, by hook or crook.

Regarding *cāturmāsya*, we should try to follow *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* and Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has written an article in which he has explained what to eat and what not to eat in each of the four months, but he did not include certain prohibitions. So you should read *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* and try to follow it. If you take fruits, they should be taken once in a day, not again and again, so many times in a day. I only try to follow my Gurudeva. We should follow our Gurudeva.

Regarding serving the Deities during Cāturmāsya, certainly we cannot keep our fingernails so long. We try to be neat and clean to serve the Deities.

During the four-month *cāturmāsya-vrata*, we should bathe the Deities with *pañcāmṛta* (yogurt, milk, ghee, honey, and sugar), and this *pañcāmṛta* should be taken by us. At that time it becomes *pañcāmṛta-caraṇāmṛta*, and therefore it should be taken. This is also true in the case of *dahī* (yogurt) and *madhu*. *Madhu*, honey, is prohibited, but when it is included in that *pañcāmṛta*, it can also be taken. Only during *nirjalā-ekādaśī* is *pañcāmṛta-caraṇāmṛta* prohibited, although it can be taken after breaking fast.

We should try to follow the culture and activities of Vaiṣṇava behavior. Whether outsiders criticize or not, we should try to follow all principles strictly. This is *pracāra*. We should not leave the *bhakti* cult in any way. Once an Indian devotee prayed to Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja, “I have not shaved, I will take only *tulasī-mālā* on my neck, and I will not do *Kārttika-vrata* or *ekādaśī-vrata*. But I will follow you and I want to live with you.” Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja rejected the proposal. Actually, in our cult we don’t shave daily.¹³ *Brahmacārīs* and *sannyāsīs* should only shave one time in a month as we have seen Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and his followers do, and we have also heard about Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His followers doing.

We don’t follow any other *Purāṇas* or *Mahābhārata*. We follow

13 Śrīla Mahārāja has often explained that Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja was dealing in certain ways with beginners, knowing that they would come to stricter standards later on.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His followers. When there is any discrepancy between the *Vedas* and the *Purāṇas*, that is, *Bhāgavata*, we will follow *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. We should try to follow Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī and our *guru-paramparā*. I have not read *Mahābhārata* so deeply, but I know the Vaiṣṇava *paramparā*. We don't touch Tulasī on the *dvādaśī* day. We should follow this. And if you have seen *Mahābhārata* with your own eyes, then there is no harm that on *Amāvasyā* we do not touch Tulasī.

We hope this letter will find you in good health and Kṛṣṇa Consciousness,

Your ever well-wisher,
Svāmī B. V. Nārāyaṇa

Stories and Anecdotes about Ekādaśī

Deliverance of a brahma-rākṣasa

Pūjyapāda Śrīmad Bhakti-bhūdeva Śrautī Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda, was preaching in east India. He was a close friend and god-brother of *Parama-gurudeva* Śrīla Bhakti-prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. He preached pure devotion to the elderly people and children of the villages. Once, after a preaching program, he inquired from the children of the village about where to spend the night. The children directed him to a nearby abandoned house. He entered the isolated home, put his mat on the floor, and took rest for the night.

At about midnight he awoke to a terrifying voice: “I am a *brahma-rākṣasa*. I devour anyone who stays in this house, and I am going to devour you.” Despite the terrifying voice, Śrīmad Bhakti-bhūdeva Śrautī Mahārāja remained completely unperturbed. He knew that the only way to rescue this wretched soul who was suffering in a ghostly body was to give him the spiritual benefit of following one *ekādaśī*. Generally, having a ghostly body is even more distressful than being in hell. Śrīmad Bhakti-bhūdeva Śrautī Mahārāja took some water in his hand and sprinkled it in the direction of the *brahma-rākṣasa*, blessing him with the benefit of following one *ekādaśī*. Immediately, he heard a voice say, “Thank

you very much for delivering me. The benefit of observing one *ekādaśī* has rescued me from the ghostly body of a *brahma-rākṣasa*. I am feeling tremendous relief. I cannot repay you for your magnanimous gift; I am eternally indebted to you.”

After offering obeisances to Śrīmad Bhakti-bhūdeva Śrautī Mahārāja, that soul left for a better body in which he would be able to practice the various forms of devotional service.

Spiritual Lottery

One may be a very poor person earning very little money. If one must borrow twice as much as one earns to meet one’s expenses, one will certainly incur more and more debt just to maintain one’s family. However, if one buys a cheap lottery ticket and hits a jackpot of millions of dollars, all of one’s debt is instantly removed and one becomes rich.

The vow of *ekādaśī* is like winning a spiritual lottery or jackpot. One may be spiritually weak and poor; however, if one diligently observes *ekādaśī*, one will become spiritually rich and powerful.

An old lady and her husband

There was an old lady possessed by a ghost. Her husband was a strict follower of *ekādaśī*. Although he advised her to also follow that vow, the ghost in her body would not let her do so. While that ghost would also not allow her to go to a Hare Kṛṣṇa temple, it did permit her to visit a Christian church. The prayers in that church were not powerful enough to force the ghost to leave the old lady’s body; however, the ghost would have to leave her body if she heard the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* or fasted on *ekādaśī*. Whenever that lady would attempt to observe *ekādaśī* or visit a Hare Kṛṣṇa temple, the ghost would get enraged and cause her to tremble severely. She would shake like a thin plantain tree in a cyclone. The ghost was comfortable living as a parasite within her body and exploiting her senses to enjoy mundane sense objects, and it did not want to be evicted.

One day, the old lady’s husband addressed the ghost in her body, “My dear friend, why are you preventing my good wife from

observing *ekādaśī* and visiting a Hare Kṛṣṇa temple? Do not be afraid that you will become homeless by letting her do so. Rather, the great prospect of your deliverance awaits you.”

The sincere words of the old devotee awakened the good sense of the ghost, and it let the old woman observe *ekādaśī*. Right after the *pāraṇa* (completion of the *ekādaśī* vow), the old lady felt great relief as she became permanently free from the influence of the pesky ghost. The ghost left its subtle existence behind and received a gross body by the mercy of *Ekādaśī-devī*, the personal potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

The kind words of the old lady’s husband persuaded the ghost to move on. If a person is possessed by a ghost, someone should speak such soothing words to the ghost and give that spirit soul the benefit of following one *ekādaśī*. Doing so will free the ghost.

Safe Delivery

A daughter-in-law of one devotee *mātājī* was going to have a baby. After concluding that a normal delivery would be impossible, the doctor prescribed a cesarean¹⁴ delivery. *Mātājī* requested five minutes to come to a decision and called Śrīpāda Bhaktivedānta Daṇḍī Mahārāja. Śrīpāda Bhaktivedānta Daṇḍī Mahārāja bestowed the benefit of one *ekādaśī* fast on the mother. After five minutes, the doctor changed his mind and proceeded with a normal delivery.

Remote Relief

Śrī Śivarāja Kṛṣṇa Dāsa, a devotee and disciple of Śrīpāda Bhaktivedānta Daṇḍī Mahārāja, is an Engineer in Bangalore. He went by train with a group of about seventy devotees from Bangalore to Śrī Navadvīpa-*dhāma* for the annual *parikramā*. Meanwhile, his elder brother in Bangalore suffered a heart attack and was admitted to the intensive care unit of a Bangalore hospital. For about fifteen days, he remained on the border of life and death. His relatives phoned Kṛṣṇa Dāsa and reported to him the news of his brother’s ill-health. Śrī Śivarāja Kṛṣṇa Dāsa was very worried, but he

14 The delivery of a baby by surgical incision through the abdominal wall and uterus (from the belief that Julius Caesar was born that way)

explained that he could not help, as he was very far from Bangalore. He took some water in his hands and threw it on the ground, bestowing the benefit of one *ekādaśī* on his ailing brother. His brother immediately came out of his coma and inquired about Śrī Śivarāja Kṛṣṇa Dāsa. Everyone told him that Śrī Śivarāja Kṛṣṇa Dāsa had gone on Navadvīpa Parikramā and would return after ten days.

Upon returning, Śrī Śivarāja Kṛṣṇa Dāsa saw his elder brother running to greet him. His brother hugged him tightly and thanked him profusely for saving his life. Even with the best available medical care, only the benefit of one *ekādaśī* fast was able to rescue Kṛṣṇa Dāsa's brother from the terrifying jaws of Yamarāja, the god of death. His brother was fully aware of this, and therefore he was reluctant to let go of Kṛṣṇa Dāsa, clutching him tightly with brotherly affection.

Afterward, the elder brother also took a vow to strictly observe *ekādaśī*. Having personally experienced the life-saving grace of *ekādaśī*, he developed a steadfast attachment for observing it.

Two Muslim brothers

Two Muslim brothers in a city of India were living a day-to-day existence. To maintain their lives, they would pull rickshaws on the streets. Once, a rich businessman hired them to transport goods from one location to another. It was the day of *Śuddhā Ekādaśī*. The brothers, completely unaware that it was the day of *ekādaśī*, pulled the carts all day long in the hot sun. They did not take any food or water that day. They died from the sweltering heat, exertion, thirst, and hunger, and were taken to hell by the associates of Lord Yama, the god of death.

Upon arriving in hell, they saw that the residents were suffering from unbearable torture at the hands of the attendants of Yamarāja. They screamed, lamented, and wailed in piteous voices. No one was rescuing them from their hellish torment. Anticipating the horrible future awaiting them, the brothers began to tremble.

Yamarāja inquired from Citragupta, who keeps the records of everyone's sins and pious merits. Citragupta reported that these brothers had not performed any pious activity and had engaged in many sinful activities. However, they had fasted even from water up

to afternoon on *ekādaśī*; therefore, they had earned the merit of partially observing *ekādaśī*. Hearing this, Yamarāja ordered their immediate release and had them escorted back to Earth with full respect.

On coming back to life, the brothers reflected on what had happened, and they were overjoyed to personally experience the glories of the *ekādaśī* vow.

On one particular *ekādaśī*, they attended a *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* discourse given by a professional reciter. After the discourse, the organizers of the event offered everyone grain *prasāda*. However, the Muslim brothers pointed out that it was *ekādaśī*, and they refused to accept any grain *prasāda*. They recounted the entire episode of going to hell and being personally pardoned by Yamarāja due to having partially observed *ekādaśī*.

Hearing their story, the Hindu members of the audience also vowed to observe a complete fast from grains and beans on *ekādaśī*. Fasting on *ekādaśī* is indeed a panacea for those already suffering hellish torment as well as those destined for hell.

Deceased father receives spiritual help from his son

Father of one gentleman from Mumbai had deceased and used to give him audience by appearing in his dream. He used to see that his father was unhappy. He saw him wearing dirty and torn clothes. His father used to make a pitiful request for help during his appearances in his dream. That gentleman began to observe the fast on the day of Ekādaśī by the inspiration of Śrīpāda Bhaktivedānta Daṇḍī Mahārāja. He dedicated benefit of one Ekādaśī to his father. After a few days, He had the audience of his father again in the dream. He saw that his father was very happy. He was wearing the white *dhotī*, white shirt and white shawl. His forehead was decorated with the vertical *urddhva-puṇḍra gopī-candana tilaka*. He was wearing *tulasī* neck-beads. He had the *tulasī* chanting beads in his hands. He happily gave blessings to his son and conveyed the auspicious message that he has received the auspicious destination due to the mercy of Ekādaśī.

Ekādaśī Māhātmya

Introduction

This book (*Ekādaśī Māhātmya*) has been published by the unlimited mercy of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Nobody has ever published such a book in the Bengali language. The faith of persons observing the vows of *ekādaśī* will be strengthened by studying the glorious subject matter of this book. Moreover, those who are inquisitive about this book will also obtain the light of knowledge.

This book does not cover the complete truth and philosophy regarding *Śrī Ekādaśī*; the glories of observing *ekādaśī* are revealed through stories. Some people may speculate that the glories described in this book are simply exaggeration, or they may think that observing *ekādaśī* is merely meant for achieving material happiness and prosperity. *Śrī ekādaśī*, which falls on the eleventh day of each waxing and waning moon, is very dear to Lord Hari; that is why this day is also known as *Hari-vāsara*. A proper and elaborate explanation of *ekādaśī* is given in *Śrī Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*. One should observe *ekādaśī* only to please the Supreme Lord. The scriptures state:

***ekādaśī vrataṁ nāma sarva kāma phala pradam
kartavyam sarvadā vipraiḥ viṣṇu prīṇana-kāraṇam***

“The *brāhmaṇas* should always observe *ekādaśī* to please Lord Viṣṇu, for this fulfills all of one’s desires.”

One should honor the vow of *ekādaśī* for the sake of satisfying the Lord; happiness and prosperity will automatically follow. *Bṛhan-Nāradya Purāṇa* states that if everyone including *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas*, *śūdras*, and women observes *ekādaśī*, they will certainly attain liberation, although various temporary benefits are also described in the scriptures because following *ekādaśī* is one of the limbs of regulative devotional service. One should understand that the principle fruit of devotional service is to develop intense love for the Supreme Lord. Even if the goals of religiosity, economic development, sense gratification, and liberation automatically come to practitioners of devotion, unalloyed, pure devotees are not satisfied with this. Rather, they abandon these objectives in favor of

love of God, the fifth and highest goal of life.

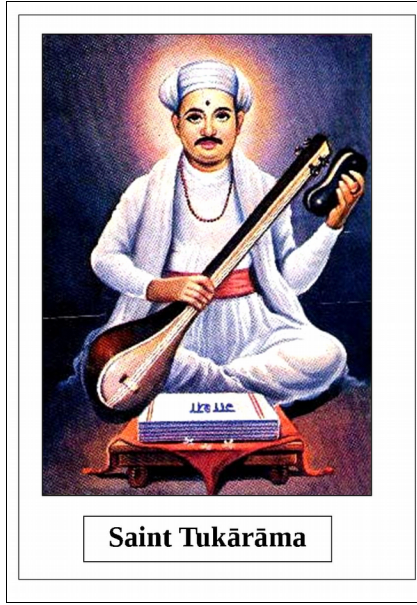
***jyāsī nāvaḍe ekādaśī, to jītācī narakavāsī
jyāsī nāvaḍe he vrata, tyāsī naraka tohi bhīta
jyāsī ghaḍe ekādaśī, jāṇe lāge viṣṇupāsī
tukā mhaṇe puṇyarāśī, toci karī ekādaśī***

“One who does not like *ekādaśī* is already in hell even when alive. Hell itself is afraid of a person who does not like the vow of *ekādaśī* because such a person is considered to be very sinful. One who follows *ekādaśī* will certainly attain Vaikuṇṭha. Therefore, Tukārāma Mahārāja says that only those who have accumulated heaps of pious merit in their lives observe *ekādaśī*.”

Tukārāma Mahārāja explains what happens if one eats grains on *ekādaśī*:

***ekādaśīsa annapāna, je nara karitī bhajana
śvāna viṣṭhesamāna, adhama jana te eka
tayā dehī yamadūta, jāle tayāce aṁkita
tukā mhaṇe vrata, ekādaśī cukaliyā***

“Those who eat grains on *ekādaśī* are indeed very fallen living entities. They are considered to be degraded because the food they take is like the stool of a dog. The Yama-dūtas (messengers of the god of death) are ready to take persons who do not observe this vow to hell.”



Since the living entities of Kali-yuga are short-lived and lusty, they are unable to perform severe austerity. They subsist on grain; they cannot survive without it. The people living in Satya, Tretā, and Dvāpara-yugas were capable of undergoing severe austerity and tolerating physical distress. That is why a minimum austerity of fasting twice a month on *ekādaśī* is prescribed for the people of Kali-yuga. If able, they should eat only once on the day before *ekādaśī*, fast totally on the day of *ekādaśī*, and eat only once on the day after *ekādaśī*. If one is unable to eat only once on the days before and after *ekādaśī*, he must observe a complete fast on the day of *ekādaśī*. If one cannot follow this, he should observe the vow of *ekādaśī* by fasting from the five types of grains and partaking of only fruits and roots. *Mahābhārata* (Udyoga Parva), quoted in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 12-40, states:

***aṣṭaitāny avrata-ghnāny āpo mūlaṁ phalaṁ payaḥ
havir brāhmaṇa-kāmyā ca guror vacanam auṣadham***

“Water, fruits, roots, milk, ghee, satisfying a *brāhmaṇa*, following the instruction of the spiritual master, and medicine do not break one’s vow of *ekādaśī*.”

Since grave sinful reactions equal to that of killing a *brāhmaṇa* or a cow take shelter within the five types of grain on *ekādaśī*, persons who desire their ultimate benefit refrain from eating grains on this day. The five types of grain are rice and products made from rice (flat rice, puffed rice, etc.), wheat flour and white flour, barley, pulses (*mung*, chickpea, green peas, lentil, etc.), and mustard oil and sesame oil. If one eats any of these grains, his *ekādaśī* vow will be broken.

Another name for *ekādaśī* is Hari-vāsara. The main purpose of observing *ekādaśī* is to fully please Lord Hari with all of one's senses. In other words, one should try to please Lord Hari and the devotees of Hari. The word *upavāsa* (fasting) means 'to live nearby'. On *ekādaśī* one should remain aloof from all kinds of sinful activities, give up all kinds of household activities and sense gratification, and be near the Lord. *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 13-14 states, as quoted in *Grhya-pariśiṣṭa*, *Kātyāyana-smṛti*, *Viṣṇu-dharma*, and *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa*:

***upāvṛttasya pāpebhyo yastu vāso guṇaiḥ saha
upavāsah sa vijñeyaḥ sarva bhoga vivarjitāḥ***

“The word *upavāsa* or ‘fasting’ refers to staying aloof from all kinds of sinful activities and sense gratification.”

Lord Hari is the transcendental Personality of Godhead, and He is beyond the three modes of material nature. It is not possible to be with Him by the efforts of the material body, mind, and intelligence. Every conditioned soul is covered by two bodies; namely, the gross body and the subtle body. Therefore, how can such a soul be with the Lord? Observing *ekādaśī* is prominent among the sixty-four limbs of devotional service described by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda, an associate of Śrīmān Mahāprabhu. Among those limbs, the first and foremost is to take shelter of a bona fide spiritual master. One cannot worship Śrī Hari without taking shelter at the lotus feet of a bona fide spiritual master who is well-conversant with the scriptures, attached to the Absolute Truth, and very dear to Śrī Hari. When one surrenders at the lotus feet of the spiritual master, by his mercy and empowerment one's material pride is destroyed, and his pure, spiritual constitutional position is revived. As a result, he becomes qualified to serve the Supreme Lord through his service-oriented

senses. In other words, he becomes qualified to live with the Lord. The mind is the cause of a living entity's bondage or liberation. If one cannot convert the function of the mind so as to be favorable for devotional service, one cannot live with the Lord. It is necessary to associate with pure devotees in order to convert a mind which is averse to service into one that is inclined to serve. Without being subordinate to the devotees of the Lord, one cannot be with the Lord, even if he engages in various external, ritualistic activities. For this reason, there is a great difference between a *karmī* (fruitive worker) observing *ekādaśī* and a devotee doing so. *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya* 22-51 states:

***mahat-kṛpā vinā kona karme 'bhakti' naya
kṛṣṇa-bhakti dūre rahu, saṁsāra nahe kṣaya***

“Unless one is favored by a pure devotee, he cannot attain the platform of devotional service. To say nothing of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, one cannot even be relieved from the bondage of material existence.”

Those who observe *ekādaśī* are divided into three categories.

1. The majority of the people of this world consider their gross and subtle bodies as the self. They think that the rules and regulations of the scriptures, and the instructions of the sages, are meant for protecting the interest of their gross bodies. They are doubtful about the existence of the soul, and thus they give more importance to the interest of the body. Their conception is that if the soul exists at all, it is simply for the sake of the gross body.

2. Other people believe that the constitutional position of a living entity is that he is a spirit soul, not the body; that the Supreme Lord is the cause of the living entities; and that it is the duty of a living entity to worship the Supreme Lord. Still, they consider the deliverance of the soul and happiness of the body to both be goals of life. That is why they think that the scriptural injunctions such as observing *ekādaśī* are meant for both deliverance of the soul and benefit of the body.

3. A minority of people say that a living entity is constitutionally part and parcel of the Supreme Lord, and is eternal, full of knowledge, and blissful. The two coverings of gross and subtle bodies are imposed on the living entities by the external energy of the Lord, and they are undesirable. Since the gross and

subtle bodies originate from the external energy of the Lord, the Supreme Lord is naturally the enjoyer and proprietor of those bodies. In other words, the soul, mind, and body of a living entity all belong to Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, it is the only duty of the soul, mind, and body to fully engage in the service of the Lord. Both oneself and others are benefited when one worships Lord Hari. Execution of pure devotional service is the only means of attaining eternal peace. Devotees cultivate the limbs of pure devotional service, such as observing *ekādaśī*, solely to please the Supreme Lord. They know that the principle purpose of all practices is to achieve love of God. They also know that the limbs of devotional service are not prescribed for material sense gratification or to benefit the gross and subtle bodies. This is the perspective of pure devotees who are following in the footsteps of Śrī Caitanya.

Some people, particularly many devotees from Jagannātha Purī in Orissa, say that there is no fault in accepting grain *mahā-prasāda* of Jagannātha on *ekādaśī*. However, one should consider that Vaiṣṇavas do not accept anything other than *mahā-prasāda*. To maintain the prestige of *ekādaśī*, they offer obeisances to grain *mahā-prasāda* on *ekādaśī*, but they do not take it until the next day.

In His childhood, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu advocated fasting on *ekādaśī*. In his *Bhakti-sandarbha*, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī gives a quotation from the *Skanda Purāṇa* stating that a person who eats grains on *ekādaśī* is like a murderer of his own mother, father, brother, or spiritual master, and even if he is somehow elevated to a Vaikuṇṭha planet, he will fall down. Anything may be cooked for Viṣṇu on *ekādaśī*, including grains and *dahl*, but a Vaiṣṇava should not take grain *viṣṇu-prasāda* on *ekādaśī*. It is said that a Vaiṣṇava does not accept any foodstuff that is not offered to Lord Viṣṇu; on *ekādaśī*, a Vaiṣṇava should not take grain *mahā-prasāda* even though it has been offered to Viṣṇu. Rather, such grain *prasāda* may be eaten the next day. It is strictly forbidden for one to accept any kind of grain on *ekādaśī*, even if it is offered to Lord Viṣṇu.

In his book *Prema-vivarta*, Śrī Jagadānanda Paṇḍita, an associate of Śrī Gaura, gives the following description regarding the following of *ekādaśī*.

“Śrī Mahāprabhu said that if one disregards the vow of *ekādaśī*,

he brings ruination on his life. One should simply respect grain *prasāda* on *ekādaśī* and save it for the next day; in this way, the negative effect will be avoided. The pious Vaiṣṇavas are satisfied by drinking the nectar of Kṛṣṇa's holy names on *ekādaśī*. They do not indulge in any kind of sense gratification, they do not speak about useless topics, and they abandon all kinds of material enjoyment. Honoring *prasāda* is an eternal activity of the pure Vaiṣṇavas; they never eat anything that is not first offered to the Lord. Devotees should fully fast on *ekādaśī* and eat the Lord's food remnants the next day. In certain situations, a Vaiṣṇava may take non-grain remnants of the Lord on *ekādaśī*. Non-Vaiṣṇavas engage in sense gratification day and night on the pretext of honoring *prasāda*. Such people associate with sinful persons and disrespect the vow of *ekādaśī* by eating grains. If one cultivates the limbs of devotional service with respect, one will attain the mercy of Bhakti-devī. One should give up the association of non-devotees, strictly observe the vow of *ekādaśī*, and chant the holy names of the Supreme Lord. It is stated in the scriptures that one should never transgress the rule of fasting on *ekādaśī*. O king, one should observe the vow of *ekādaśī* as long as he is alive."

The *Purāṇas* repeatedly declare that one should fast on *ekādaśī*. *Viṣṇu-smṛti* states that all sinful reactions, such as that for killing a *brāhmaṇa*, take shelter in grains on *ekādaśī*. Therefore, if one eats grains on *ekādaśī*, he certainly eats sin. There is no atonement powerful enough to deliver a person who eats grains on *ekādaśī*. The twenty *dharma-śāstras* give various arrangements for atonement according to the severity of the sinful activity, but eating grains on *ekādaśī* is such a grave sin that there is no atonement prescribed for it.

Persons who want to cultivate pure devotional service should carefully consider the next point regarding *ekādaśī*. Vaiṣṇavas do not observe two different vows or festivals on the same day. In the case where two vows or festivals would fall on the same day, Vaiṣṇavas observe one vow or festival on the day after the other. According to Vedic calculation, a day starts with the sunrise. If the day of *daśamī* extends to the one-and-a-half hours before the sunrise of the next day, *ekādaśī* should not be observed on the next day. Rather, it

should be observed on the day after that. In this regard, we quote some authentic scriptural statements found in *Śrī Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, the king of the Vaiṣṇava *smṛti*.

“O *brāhmaṇa*, if the day of *ekādaśī* starts ninety-six minutes before sunrise, it is a pure *ekādaśī*. A householder should fast on such an *ekādaśī*.” [*Garuḍa Purāṇa*]

“If the *tithi* or day of *ekādaśī* begins one hour and thirty-six minutes before sunrise, it is called a complete *ekādaśī*, and if the *ekādaśī* starts with less time prior to sunrise, it should be considered incomplete and contaminated because it overlaps with the previous *tithi*. One should not follow *ekādaśī* if it is mixed with the previous *tithi* at the time of sunrise. Vaiṣṇavas in particular should never observe such a contaminated *ekādaśī*. The great sage Kaṇva said, ‘If the day of *ekādaśī* is pierced with the previous *tithi*, one should fast on the day after that *ekādaśī*, and break the fast on the following day.’” [*Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*]

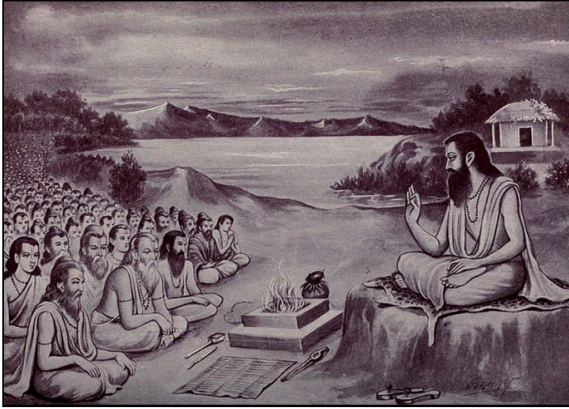
“Most days begin with the rising of the sun and end at the next rising of the sun, but this is not always the case with *ekādaśī*. An *ekādaśī* is uncontaminated and complete only if it starts at least one hour and thirty-six minutes before sunrise.” [*Skanda Purāṇa*]

We request all kind-hearted readers to carefully study the following glories of *ekādaśī*.

The Purāṇic glories of Ekādaśī

Once, in a great assembly of sages, the renowned scholar and sage Śrī Sūta Gosvāmī discussed the twenty-six *ekādaśīs*. There are two *ekādaśīs* in each month, so there are twenty-four *ekādaśīs* in a year. Besides those, there are two additional *ekādaśīs* which occur in an extra month that comes every two-and-a-half years. The names of the first twenty-four *ekādaśīs* are Utpannā, Mokṣadā, Saphalā, Putradā, Ṣaṭ-tilā, Jayā, Vijayā, Āmalakī, Pāpamocanī, Kāmadā, Varuthinī, Mohinī, Aparā, Nirjala, Yoginī, Śayana, Kāmikā, Pavitrā, Annadā, Pārśva, Indirā, Pāśāṅkuśā, Rāma, and Utthāna. The names of the two additional *ekādaśīs* are Padminī and Parama. In that assembly, the glories of all of the *ekādaśīs* were properly sung. Those who are unable to observe *ekādaśī* can attain the benefits of

doing so by hearing and singing those glories.



Sūta Gosvāmī discusses the glories of Ekādaśī in a great assembly of sages.

Aparā Ekādaśī

Aparā *ekādaśī*, which occurs during the waning moon in the month of Jyeṣṭha (May-June), is described in *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* in a conversation between Lord Kṛṣṇa and Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira.

Once, Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira asked Lord Kṛṣṇa, “O Janārdana, what is the name of the *ekādaśī* that occurs during the waning moon in the month of Jyeṣṭha, and what are its glories? Please explain these things to me.”

Lord Kṛṣṇa replied, “O Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, you have asked an intelligent question that is beneficial for everyone. The name of this *ekādaśī* is Aparā. O king, it awards great piety to those who observe it, and eliminates their reactions to sins including killing a *brāhmaṇa*, killing a cow, killing an embryo by abortion, criticizing others, engaging in illicit sex-life, speaking lies, bearing false

witness, bragging, reciting or teaching the *Vedas* for the sake of money, and concocting one's own scripture. A cheater, a pseudo-astrologer, and a dishonest physician are as sinful as one who bears false witness. All of these sinful activities are totally nullified by observing Aparā *ekādaśī*. A *kṣatriya* who abandons his duty and leaves the battlefield certainly loses his position in society and goes to hell. If such a person observes this *ekādaśī* with faith, he is saved and he will attain the heavenly planets.

Lord Kṛṣṇa continued, “O king, a disciple who receives knowledge from his spiritual master and then blasphemes him certainly commits a great sin. Such a condemned person can be saved by following Aparā *ekādaśī*, and he will attain the supreme destination. O king of kings, by observing this vow one easily gets the results or piety obtained by taking bath three times at Puṣkara in the month of *Kārttika*; by taking bath at Prayāga in the month of January when the sun enters Capricorn; by observing the vow of Śivarātrī at Kāśī; by offering oblations at the lotus feet of Viṣṇu at Gayā; by taking bath in the Gautamī River when Jupiter enters Leo; by visiting Kedāranātha during Kumbha-melā; by visiting and worshiping Badarīnātha; by taking bath at Kurukṣetra during a solar eclipse; or by giving elephants, horses, cows, gold, or land in charity. This vow is like a sharp ax for cutting down the tree of sinful activities, and like a blazing fire for burning the forest of sins to ashes. It is like a brilliant sun for eradicating the darkness born of sinful activities, and like a lion for devouring the deer of sins. O king, by observing Aparā *ekādaśī* and worshiping Lord Viṣṇu in His form as Trivikrama, a person attains the all-auspicious abode of Lord Viṣṇu. Anyone who hears or reads about the glories of this *ekādaśī*, which I have described to you for the benefit of everyone, is relieved from all of his sinful reactions.”

The great devotee and lord of the city of demigods, Mahārāja Rukmāṅgada, had a wonderful, charming flower garden in his kingdom that everyone wanted to see. Eventually, people visiting that garden picked so many flowers that there was not even one left for the king. Thus, it became like a deserted wasteland. The king was very sad to see the pitiful condition of the garden. Although he increased the number of guards there, the theft of the flowers

continued. He also took many other measures, but none were effective because the entities taking the flowers were not human beings, and they could not be caught. Those entities were the demigods, demigoddesses and Apsarās of heaven.

Finally, the king requested his family priest to solve this problem. That priest explained that if foot-bath water of Bhagavān Viṣṇu, or flowers or flower garlands offered to the Deity of Bhagavān, were placed in the garden, it would be possible to catch the thieves. The king ordered that this be done.

One night, the demigods, demigoddesses, and Apsarās descended to that garden, just as they had done previously. As soon as the foot of one of the Apsarās touched a flower that had been offered to the Lord, all of her pious merit was exhausted, and she lost her ability to return to heaven. The other demigods and demigoddesses tried to find a way to bring her back, but they failed and became dejected. They had to leave her behind when they returned to heaven. That unfortunate Apsarā, now unable to fly back to heaven, remained there alone. Separated from her friends and facing the unavoidable distressful features of this mortal world such as old age and disease, she began to weep, thinking, “Alas, I will have to live in this mortal world.”

In the morning, the guards and gardeners saw her in the garden and were astonished by her heavenly effulgence and incomparable beauty. They went to the king’s palace and told him the news. The king went to the garden and saw the Apsarā’s extraordinary beauty. Thinking that she must be Durgā, Lakṣmī, or Sarasvatī, the king offered his obeisances to her.

The king saw her crying and felt great compassion for her. He asked, “O goddess, why are you weeping? Why are you in distress?”

The Apsarā told him her story, and that she wanted to go back to heaven. She explained that on the planet of human beings, old age comes early, many diseases attack the body, and one cannot enjoy sufficient sense gratification to satisfy one’s desires. She said, “Mahārāja, I can return to heaven if one of your subjects donates the result of one *ekādaśī* to me. By receiving the benefit of one *ekādaśī*, I will be able to enjoy the divine happiness of heaven for one

*kalpa*¹⁵.”

King Rukmāṅgada did not know anything about *ekādaśī*. When he inquired from his *rājaguru* (royal spiritual preceptor) about this, his *rājaguru* said, “This is the first time that I have heard about the vow of *ekādaśī*.” The king announced in his city that a reward would be given to any citizen who was willing to donate the result of one *ekādaśī*. When no citizen came forward for three or four days, he kept increasing the amount of the reward until finally he offered half of his kingdom. Still, no one came forward. Citragupta, the accountant of Yamarāja, told the Apsarā that there was a wealthy merchant in Rukmāṅgada’s kingdom whose wife had observed the vow of *ekādaśī* due to feelings of helplessness.

The Apsarā told the king about the rich merchant and where he lived. She said, “One day, the wife of that rich merchant went to a warehouse in an isolated place near her home to look for some goods. The rich merchant’s servants did not know that she was inside the warehouse. When the rich merchant called his servants, they locked up the warehouse and went away.

“The wife of the rich merchant was locked inside the warehouse. She banged on the door for a long time, but due to the isolated location, no one heard. Anxious and unable to do anything, she slept there overnight, thinking that someone would open the door the next day. However, due to fate, the next day was a holiday and nobody came to the warehouse. The rich merchant’s wife began to suffer from extreme hunger and thirst.

“In the meantime, the merchant and his family became very disturbed. They searched everywhere for her, but she could not be found. No one thought of looking in the warehouse because the merchant’s wife never used to go there. She had simply gone there out of curiosity the day she got locked in.

“When the merchant’s servants opened the door of the warehouse the day after the holiday, they found her unconscious. They quickly informed the merchant, and a nearby doctor was summoned. He sprinkled water on her face and massaged her hands and feet, and brought her back to consciousness. Lunch was arranged

15 A *kalpa* is a day of Brahmā, and one day of Brahmā consists of a thousand cycles of four *yugas*, or ages: Satya, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali.

for her, and slowly she began to recuperate and gain strength.

“By coincidence, the day that the merchant’s wife went to the warehouse was *daśamī*, and the next day, when she was locked inside and forced to fully fast, was *ekādaśī*. In this way, she unknowingly observed the holy vow of *ekādaśī*.”

After hearing the Apsarā’s narration, the king ordered his ministers and soldiers to bring the merchant and his wife, and to treat them with proper respect. When they arrived at the palace, they offered their obeisances to the king and to the Apsarā, and they said, “Your ministers have explained everything to us. Now, please tell us what to do.”

The Apsarā said to the merchant’s wife, “If you would mercifully give me the charity of the result of your vow of *ekādaśī* by making a pledge, I will be able to return to heaven.” Then, the king arranged for his royal spiritual preceptor to administer the pledge to the merchant’s wife, thus bestowing the benefit of *ekādaśī* upon the Apsarā. That goddess expressed her gratitude to the king, the merchant, the merchant’s wife, and everyone else, and returned to heaven. The king fulfilled his promise by giving half of his kingdom to the merchant’s wife.



Apsarā requests King Rukmāṅgada to send her to heaven

Through his involvement in this incident, Mahārāja Rukmāṅgada became fully convinced of the great glory and potency of *ekādaśī*. One day, he decided that every citizen of his kingdom must regularly observe the vow of *ekādaśī*, which bestows so much pious merit and benefit. Therefore, he issued the following proclamation:

***aṣṭavarṣādhiko marttyodhaśīti naiva pūyaryate
yo bhuñkte māmake rāṣṭre viṣṇorahani pāpakṛta
sa me vadhyaś ca nirvāśyo deśataḥ kālataḥś ca me
etasmāta kāraṇād viprā ekādaśyā amu poṣaṇam
kūryannaro vā nārī vā pakṣayor ubhayor api***

(Nāradya-purāṇa)

“If anyone between the ages of eight and eighty eats grains on *ekādaśī*, they will be executed or banished from my kingdom. Every woman and man must follow the *ekādaśī* vows during both the bright and dark fortnights. This rule applies to everyone including

my son, mother, father, wife, friends, and relatives. I will punish anyone who does not follow it.”

The king prominently announced this to the entire kingdom. All of his subjects followed his order and observed *ekādaśī*, and as a result they eventually went to Vaiṣṇava.

The *Brahma-purāṇa* states that Aparā *ekādaśī* bestows great pious merit, nullifies even the most serious sins, and gives unlimited benefits.

The day of Ekādaśī is superior to even Janmāṣṭamī

For Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the day of *ekādaśī* is superior to even Janmāṣṭamī. The Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the embodiment of all auspiciousness, manifests in this world in the form of *Mādhava-tithi* or *ekādaśī*. The potency of Viṣṇu, which takes innumerable forms, has appeared as the most auspicious day of *ekādaśī* in order to bestow all types of auspiciousness on the living entities. (Om Viṣṇupāda Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja)

One must not pick Tulasī leaves on Dvādaśī day

na chindyāt tulasīm vipra dvadaśyām vaiṣṇavaḥ kvacit

(Hari-bhakti-vilāsa, 7/354, Viṣṇu-dharmottara)

O brāhmaṇas, a Vaiṣṇava never picks *tulasī* leaves on *dvādaśī* (the day after *ekādaśī*).

bhānūvāraṁ vinā durvām tulasīm dvādaśīm vinā

jīvitasya avināśāya na vicinvita dharma vit

(Hari-bhakti-vilāsa, 7/355, Garuḍa-purāṇa)

A scripturally-learned person, if he does not want to decrease his duration of life, should not pick grass or *tulasī* leaves for worship on *dvādaśī*.

dvadaśyām tulasī patram dhātri patraś ca kārṭike

lunati sa naro gacchet nirayaṁ atī garhitam

(Hari-bhakti-vilāsa 7/356, Padma-purāṇa,

Conversation between Kṛṣṇa and Satyabhāmā)

If a person picks *Tulasī* leaves on *dvādaśī*, or picks Āmalakī leaves during Kārttika, he falls to a grievously hellish planet to

suffer.

Ekādaśī Vrata is an Aṅga of Bhakti

This *ekādaśī-vrata* is one of the *aṅgas* of *sādhana-bhakti* – *ekādaśī-upavāsa*, fasting on *ekādaśī*. In *Sanātana-śikṣā*, Mahāprabhu is teaching Sanātana Gosvāmī:

***vividhāṅga sādhanā-bhaktira bahuta vistāra
saṅkṣepe kahiye kichu sādhanāṅga-sāra
guru-pādāśraya, dīkṣā, gurura sevana
sad-dharma-śikṣā-prcchā, sādhu-mārgānugamana
kṛṣṇa-prītye bhoga-tyāga, kṛṣṇa-tīrthe vāsa
yāvan-nirvāha-pratigraha, ekādaśy-upavāsa***

[*Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya 22.114-116*]

Mahāprabhu gives instruction to Sanātana Gosvāmī while teaching *sādhana-bhakti*. He says – precisely I am saying – that *sādhana-bhakti* has manifold *aṅgas* – sixty-four *aṅgas* – and *ekādaśī-vrata* is one of them.

One Must Fast on Ekādaśī

***kṛṣṇa-prītye bhoga-tyāga, kṛṣṇa-tīrthe vāsa
yāvan-nirvāha-pratigraha, ekādaśy-upavāsa***

[*Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya 22.116*]

The next steps are as follows. One should be prepared to give up everything for Kṛṣṇa’s satisfaction, and one should also accept everything for Kṛṣṇa’s satisfaction. One must live in a place where Kṛṣṇa is present – a city like Vṛndāvana or Mathurā, or a Kṛṣṇa temple. One should acquire a livelihood that is just sufficient to keep body and soul together. One must fast on the day of *ekādaśī*.

Mahāprabhu has said to give up all of your sense enjoyment for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa. Every *ekādaśī* one should fast. There are two *ekādaśīs* in a month, and twenty-four in a year. Complete fasting should be done; no eating. There are many fasting days: Janmāṣṭamī, Rāma-navamī, Nityānanda Prabhu’s appearance day, Baladeva Prabhu’s appearance day, Varāha-dvādaśī, Nṛsimha-caturdaśī, and Gaura Pūrṇimā. Many fasting days are there in the Vaiṣṇava calendar. Following these fasting days is considered to be a *vrata*. *Kṛṣṇa-prītye* means ‘for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa’, so this is *tapasyā*.

Mahāprabhu said so many things to Sanātana Gosvāmī while instructing him on the *sādhana-bhakti-aṅga*.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu asked Śacīmātā to observe *ekādaśī* by fasting. In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Ādi-līlā 15th chapter, you’ll find:

***eka dina mātāra pade kariyā praṇāma
prabhu kahe,—mātā, more deha eka dāna
mātā bale,—tāi dība, yā tumi māgibe
prabhu kahe,—ekādaśīte anna nā khāibe***

[*Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Ādi 15.8-9]

One day, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu fell at the feet of His mother and requested her to give Him one thing in charity. His mother replied, “My dear son, I will give You whatever You ask.” Then the Lord said, “My dear mother, please do not eat grains on the day of *ekādaśī*.”

Mahāprabhu asked His mother to fast on *ekādaśī*: “My mother, please don’t eat grains on *ekādaśī*.” Śacīmātā accepted this, and from that day forward she started to observe *ekādaśī*. Prior to this, Śacīmātā did not fast. She took grains on *ekādaśī* because according to the *smārta brāhmaṇas*, only women who are widows should fast on *ekādaśī*; those who are not widows don’t need to observe it. That was the prevailing culture at the time. So, Śacīmātā was not observing *ekādaśī* fasting, but Mahāprabhu requested her to now follow it. Mahāprabhu fell at the feet of His Mother and requested her to give one thing in charity. Śacīmātā replied, “My dear son, I will give You whatever You ask.” Then Mahāprabhu said, “My dear mother, please don’t eat grains on *ekādaśī*.” From that day on, Śacīmātā observed *ekādaśī*.

The science behind the Ekādaśī fast

Ekādaśī is the eleventh day of the moon cycle, both from the full moon and from the new moon.

According to modern science, the air pressure on our planet peaks on both the day of the new moon (*Amāvasyā*) and the day of the full moon (*Pūrṇimā*). This is due to the combination of the orbital paths of the sun, moon, and Earth.

This can be observed by the change in the nature of the ocean waves on the new moon and full moon days. The waves are very

high and rough at those times, but from the next day onwards the waves become calmer, indicating that the air pressure has decreased.

Based on this, the significance of *ekādaśī* fasting can be explained in two ways.

1) According to science, it takes about three to four days for the energy from the food that we eat to reach our brain. If we eat lightly or fast on *ekādaśī* days, that energy will reach the brain on the corresponding new moon or full moon day. On both of these days, the air pressure of the Earth is at its maximum, leading to various imbalances, including in our thought process. If the energy input to the brain is at a minimum, the chance of the brain indulging in negative or unfavorable thoughts due to pressure-induced imbalance is minimized.

2) The atmospheric pressure on the *ekādaśī* days is lower than it is on other days of the lunar cycle. Thus, this is the best time to fast and cleanse the bowel system. If we fast on other days, the high pressure may cause a strain and damage our system. Thus, after fasting on *ekādaśī*, we should get up early the next day (*dvādaśī*) and eat as soon as possible.

As indicated by both of these considerations, fasting on *ekādaśī* has firm scientific basis. Observing this fast involves not eating any type of grain, and restricting oneself to a light diet of nuts, milk, fruits, and other allowable items.

Fasting gives our bodily systems a rest. Due to overeating or lack of discrimination in diet, systems like digestion may become overworked. Thus, the fortnightly *ekādaśī* fasting gives our bodies an opportunity to recover. We know that the digestive system draws blood circulation towards the digestive organs, and that we feel sleepy after eating because blood circulation to the brain is decreased. Thus, observing *ekādaśī* contributes to refreshing our brain and mind, making us more alert and focused.

Fortnightly *ekādaśī* fasting, which provides for light, healthy eating, improves insulin responsiveness, lowers blood cholesterol, and increases lifespan. It helps to improve mental stability in people suffering from anxiety and depression. It also detoxifies the body, cleanses the blood, and improves kidney and liver function. It is amazing how observing *ekādaśī*, as first practiced by the ancient

Vedic Indians, keeps us healthy and protects us from negative influences!

Scientific Explanation of Ekādaśī Benefits

The human body is 80% liquid and 20% solid. Keeping this biological fact in mind helps us to understand the benefits of the *ekādaśī* fast.

We are aware of high tides on new moon and full moon days, and low tides on the seventh day of the lunar cycle. This is due to the moon's gravity attracting the water on Earth. The Earth and moon always attract each other, but on certain days the attraction is higher due to their proximity. This attraction causes tides in the oceans, and it is certain that our bodies and minds are also subject to cycles and effects governed by the moon. The gravitational force of the moon exerts its influence on the water in the human body, just as it does on the oceans of the Earth.

Arnold Lieber, a Miami, Florida psychiatrist, experimented and found that 'biological tides' affect our moods and behavior. Many psychiatric hospitals have reported that the behavior of mental patients becomes more disturbing and erratic on full moon or new moon days. In the article, "Does the Moon Control Your Moods?" Edgar Ziegler reports that the Phoenix, Arizona fire department found that it receives twenty-five to thirty more calls on full moon nights than on other nights. On high tide days, when the moon is closest to the Earth, people whose mind or body is weak are especially vulnerable to suffering. Some people with weak bowels complain of the worst problems on such days.

Edgar Ziegler's article tells of many amazing incidents. He writes that Fergus Wood, a scientist with the U.S. National Ocean Survey, reported several years ago that two consecutive extreme high tides would occur on January 8 and February 7 of 1974. Wood realized that on those days the Earth, sun, and moon would be positioned along a nearly-straight line called a Sygy, and that on January 8, 1974 the moon would be especially close to the Earth. This astronomical alignment causes ocean water to rise far above normal levels. Hearing of this prediction and fearing a disturbance, Arnold Lieber alerted the Miami police department, the newspapers,

and the psychiatric ward at Miami's Jackson Memorial Hospital. It turned out that Miami's murder rate for the week including January 8, 1974 was two times higher than that for all of January 1973. Also, there were numerous incidences of crimes without an obvious motive. This is just one example of how human behavior and personality are affected by the gravity of the moon.

Studies on the influence of celestial bodies on us have shown that an imbalance of hormones and fluids can occur, and that these imbalances can play a major role in our bodily and mental diseases. Certain glands and hormones are involved in the physio-psychic expressions known as *vṛttis* (propensities), which include fear, greed, hatred, passion, and anger. There are fifty such *vṛttis*, and they may be subject to abnormalities by hormone imbalances stemming from overproduction or underproduction. Arnold Lieber considered only a few of these *vṛttis*, but many or all of them may be affected by the lunar cycle.

Also, our skin is a semi-permeable membrane that permits movement of electromagnetic forces in both directions, maintaining a dynamic equilibrium. Arnold Lieber says that each nerve impulse generates a small aura of energy in the associated cells, like a miniature solar system, and produces a faint electromagnetic field. It is possible that the gross electromagnetic forces originating in celestial bodies affect the balance in these microscopic cellular worlds. During extreme tides, there is a chance of heavy bombardment by massive, disturbing electromagnetic fields that may affect the nervous system and weaken nerve fibers.

Lieber found in his research on a number of manic depression patients recurrences of depression, restlessness, insomnia, and rapid heartbeat during days of extreme tides. Attacks of mental illness are more common on days of extreme tides, and this effect is seen from *ekādaśī* to the new moon, or from *ekādaśī* to the full moon. Thus, fasting on *ekādaśī* has various effects on the body and mind, including counteracting negative influences. The first and foremost effect is keeping hormones and other secretions from glands and cells in balance. As there will be no or less food and water in the stomach on fasting days, lunar gravity will not affect the intestines, kidneys, liver, and other organs as much. Further, the forces within

the body will tend to be centripetal – oriented toward the inside of the body. So, the internal gravitational force will be better able to compensate for and balance the elevated external gravitational force of the moon. This will help control the functions of all of the organs, as well as chemical changes, cell growth, and other biological processes.

As long as bodily and mental functions are normal and balanced, diseases will be rare and longevity will be greatly extended. It is good to fast on both the *ekādaśī* day of the full moon and that of the new moon. Fasting on *ekādaśī* is a must for everyone, male and female, older than twelve years. As *ekādaśī* falls between the seventh and fifteenth days of the lunar cycle (the days of neap tide and high tide), fasting on *ekādaśī* helps to balance the effects of lunar attraction. For the best results, fasting can be done on four days of the month: *ekādaśī* before the new moon, the day of the new moon, *ekādaśī* before the full moon, and the day of the full moon. In this way, there will be less or no damage from celestial electromagnetic forces on the tiny cells of our body, and equilibrium can be better maintained.

Experiments have shown that manic depression patients may be cured by such systematic fasts, and many other mental problems prevalent in the modern world may be reduced. Excessive sexual agitation, anger, irritation, fear, greed, and passion, for example, may be controlled by these fasts. Even hypertension can be effectively managed with the help of *ekādaśī* fasting.

Some people fear that they will become weak due to fasting, but this fear is unwarranted. Fasting for a day gives a rest to the machinery of the stomach, thereby helping it to function better in the future. Moreover, there will be time for undigested or partially digested food to be completely digested. Additionally, fasting increases the power of digestion and facilitates the conversion of food energy into blood and other necessary bodily components, leading to better health and nutrition. Fasting helps to prevent not only stomach ailments, but other types of ailments as well. It promotes better function of the liver, pancreas, intestines, kidneys, and other organs, thereby reducing the chance of a multitude of diseases.

Fasting on *ekādaśī* also helps in the conversion of chemicals in the body into subtler materials like the ectoplasmic substance of the mind (*citta* or mind-stuff), which is important because this ectoplasmic substance allows contact with higher spheres of consciousness. If one seriously practices the science of meditation, fasting may be done more strictly by not eating anything and also not drinking anything. Spiritually, fasting (*upavāsa*) means to stay in divine consciousness so that one may be close to the Supreme Conscious Being. This is only possible if one rejects the activities of the external sensory and motor organs (*indriyas*), and concentrates on the various aspects (*bhāvas*) of the Supreme Consciousness or Supreme Lord. One will certainly remain physiologically and psychologically balanced, and be a candidate to attain the ultimate spiritual purpose of life, by not eating or drinking on *ekādaśī*, and meditating on transcendental topics.

Scientific importance of fasting on Ekādaśī

Since time immemorial, devotees have been fasting twice a month on the *ekādaśī* days. This fasting is, in general, for everyone. *Ekādaśī* (*eka* means ‘one’, and *daśa* means ‘ten’) is the eleventh day in the lunar cycle, counting from the new moon day and also from the full moon day.

According to research, the air pressure in the Earth’s atmosphere changes rapidly on both the day of the new moon (*Amāvasyā*) and the day of the full moon (*Pūrṇimā*). This is due to the orbital paths of the sun, moon, and Earth, and their varying distances from one another at particular intervals (for example, relative to the twenty-four-hour period for one complete rotation of the Earth). Accordingly, the atmospheric pressure changes drastically over time, and varies from day to day.

This is apparent from the changes in the ocean waves on the new moon and full moon days. On an *Amāvasyā*, the waves are very high and rough due to the increased atmospheric pressure on the ocean. However, after that the waves become calmer, indicating that the air pressure has lessened. On the eleventh day from the new moon or full moon days, the air pressure is at its minimum.

Compared to the other days of the lunar cycle, atmospheric

pressure is lowest on *ekādaśī*, making this the best time to fast and cleanse our bodies. Due to higher air pressure, fasting on other days may have undesirable effects. On *ekādaśī* the body is more resistant to discomfort and pain while we cleanse ourselves, and the various organs, especially the liver, stomach, and bowels, will be refreshed. Since the atmospheric pressure doubles on the twelfth day from *Amāvasyā* and *Pūrṇimā* (*dvādaśī*), people fasting on *ekādaśī* are advised to consume food as early as possible the next day to avoid any complications in the body.

It is noted that fasting on *ekādaśī* is also very conducive for concentrating on meditation and prayers. According to science, it takes three or four days for the brain to absorb energy from our food after we eat. It is said that if we eat lightly or not at all on *ekādaśī* days, that energy will reach the brain at the optimal time on the new moon or full moon day.

Health Benefits

Nowadays, people also fast for health reasons; fasting helps in the detoxification of the body. Everyone wants to look good by keeping their bodies in shape. Accordingly, many youngsters across India are regularly fasting. In the medical context, fasting refers to the bodily condition after a meal is digested. A number of metabolic adjustments occur during fasting, and many medical diagnostic tests for blood sugar and cholesterol levels are standardized to fasting conditions. Thus, fasting in India has both medical and religious significance.

Cleansing of the bowels – those who fast on *ekādaśī* stay in good health; their bowel system is cleansed and they usually do not suffer from frequent ailments. Also, it is said that for those on the spiritual/religious path, observing *ekādaśī* fasting leads to the peace of self-realization. The austerity of fasting is believed to aid in the spiritual path by purifying the body and mind.

Providing a better way of life – Fasting improves blood circulation and elimination of toxins from the body, resulting in better overall health. The regular faster feels more energetic and alert, and is more resistant to diseases. Fasting even slows down the aging process, which in general is a result of our accumulated bad

habits and negative thinking. A day of fasting teaches one self-control and discipline, and regular fasting helps us to break addictions that are spoiling our lives and to establish new, positive habits.

Now, let us look at some other scientific facts concerning the eleventh day from the full and new moons. In the Indian Vedic system, there are different methods to calculate a month. One such method involves counting from the new moon day (*Amāvasyā*). The period from the new moon day to the full moon day is called *Śukla-pakṣa* (waxing/growing moon). The period from the full moon day to the next *Amāvasyā* is known as *Kṛṣṇa-pakṣa* (waning/shrinking moon). In celestial phenomena, the Earth and moon rise and set at the same time on *Amāvasyā*. From the next day to *Amāvasyā*, the moon moves about twelve degrees from the solar path. On the *ekādaśī* day (eleventh day from the full moon), the moon stays at a distance of about 135 degrees from the solar path, and this results in lower gravitational force and lower atmospheric pressure. Therefore, fasting on *ekādaśī* will protect the bodily systems, and it is also said that hunger is at its minimum at this time.

Saṅkalpa Mantras for the Ekādaśī fast

Daśamī Saṅkalpa Mantra

*daśamī divase prāpte vratasthohaṁ janārdana
tridinaṁ devadeveśa nirvighnaṁ kuru keśava*

(*Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa*)

Since today is *daśamī*, I am ready for a three-day vow. O Lord of lords, O Keśava, please see that no obstacles come to disturb my vow.

Ekādaśī Saṅkalpa Mantra (Vow to fast on ekādaśī)

*ekādaśyāṁ nirāhāraḥ sthithvāhani pare hyahaṁ
bhokṣyāmi puṇḍarikākṣa śaranam me bhavācyuta*

(*Bṛhan-Nāradiya Purāṇa*, 21st Chapter, Verse 15)

After fasting on *ekādaśī*, I will honor *prasādam* on *dvādaśī*. Please be my refuge, O Acyuta!

Saṅkalpa for fasting for two days

adyaśvaśeḥa nirāhāro bhūtvāhaṁ dvādaśī dine

vidhāsyē pāraṇam deva prīto bhava ma māniśam

(*Varāha Purāṇa*)

I will fast tonight and tomorrow, and break the fast on *dvādaśī*. O Lord, may You be pleased! (The evening meal on *daśamī*, two meals on *ekādaśī*, and the evening meal on *dvādaśī* – four meals in total – are forbidden over these three days.)

Dvādaśī Saṅkalpa Mantra

***ekādaśyupavāsena dvādaśī pāraṇena ca
yadarjitam mayā puṇyam tena prīṇātu keśava***

May Lord Keśava be pleased with the pious merit that I have earned by fasting on *ekādaśī* and breaking the fast on *dvādaśī*.

Pāraṇa Mantra

***tava prasāda svīkārāt kṛtam yat pāraṇam mayā
vratenānena santuṣṭaḥ svastiṁ bhaktiṁ prayaccha me***

O Lord, I am performing the *pāraṇa* of this vow and accepting Your *prasāda*. Be pleased by this vow and bestow devotional service and auspiciousness upon me.

Pāraṇena Anantara Samarpaṇa Mantra

(Dedication of the result to Bhagavān after breaking the fast)

***ajñāna-timirāndhasya vṛtenānena keśava
prasannaḥ sumukhobhūtvā jñāna-dṛṣṭi-prado bhava***

O Lord, O Keśava, I am blinded by the darkness of ignorance. May my fasting on *ekādaśī* please You so that You will bless me with the light of knowledge.

In this way, one should remember Śrī Hari and perform the *pāraṇa* at the prescribed time. In this connection, *Skanda Purāṇa* states, “By honoring *prasādam* sanctified with *tulasī* leaves on the day of *dvādaśī* after fasting on *ekādaśī*, billions of sins are destroyed.” (*Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*–13/227) “Even if one is faced with a disturbing crisis, it is one’s duty to dedicate the fast to Śrī Hari by chanting the *mantra* and performing the *pāraṇa* by drinking water.” (*Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*–13/255)

Ekādaśī – Kali-yuga's only austerity

by Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja

It is described in the *śāstras* that in Satya-yuga, as long as a

man's bones exist, that is how long he would live – along with the longevity of the bones, the life will be there.

In Tretā-yuga, life may be maintained in the nervous system. In ages other than Kali, people could tolerate great penances because their bodies were not completely dependent on food. However, it is stated that in Kali-yuga, *kalāv anna-gataḥ prāṇaḥ* – one's longevity depends on food. It is not possible to live without food.

All penances have been especially adjusted for Kali-yuga, and the only continuous fast allowed in Kali-yuga is for twenty-four hours – not more than that. In other ages, at least twelve days of fasting was generally done. If a person had done anything wrong, then according to the *smṛti-śāstra*, twelve days of fasting was the standard punishment for any sins.

However, in Kali-yuga, twenty-four hour fasting is the maximum, because without food one cannot survive.

Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī and an Ekādaśī lesson

(From Prema-vilāsa, or Pastimes of Divine Love)

Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī was a pure devotee of the Lord. Ordinary people cannot understand his activities. If one doubts his behavior, one is sure to fall down. Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī had many disciples, including Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, Harivaṁśa Vrajavāsī, the very learned Gopīnātha Pujārī, Śambhu-rāma, and Makaranda from Gujarat. Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī gave the responsibility of serving Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa to Gopīnātha Pujārī.

Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī's disciple Harivaṁśa disobeyed his order, so Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī rejected him. Harivaṁśa then lost all of his good fortune and good qualities; here is what happened.

Harivaṁśa Vrajavāsī was a renowned scholar who had always faithfully served his spiritual master, and Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī was pleased with him. Yet, by the arrangement of Providence, Harivaṁśa disobeyed his guru's order.

Once on *ekādaśī*, Harivaṁśa, chewing betel nuts, went to his spiritual master. When Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī asked him about the betel nuts, he said that they were the prasāda of Śrī Rādhā. Gopāla

Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī said, “You must not eat anything on *ekādaśī*, not even Lord Hari’s remnants. *Śāstra* states: *prasādānnam sadā grāhyaṁ harer ekādaśīm vinā* – ‘One should honor Lord Hari’s remnants, except on *ekādaśī*.’ Therefore, do not do this again; otherwise, it will be an offense.”

Harivaṁśa offered his obeisances and left. Unfortunately, he had become addicted to chewing betel nuts and thus could not stop doing so. On the next *ekādaśī*, with red lips and chewing betel nuts that had been offered to Śrī Rādhikā, he again went to see his spiritual master. Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī said, “You are a learned person, so why are you acting in such an ignorant way? By chewing betel nuts on *ekādaśī*, you are accumulating all types of sinful reactions. Despite being learned, you have disobeyed my order. I reject you because of this offense.”

Harivaṁśa pleaded, “These betel nuts are *prasāda*, and I cannot give up the habit of chewing them. I may have committed an offense by transgressing your order, but I cannot disregard Rādhikā’s remnants.”

Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī was furious after hearing this argument, so Harivaṁśa quickly left. In this way, he was deprived of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa’s service.

Later, Harivaṁśa independently installed Deities of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-vallabha in Vṛndāvana. He had two sons named Vana-candra and Vṛndāvana-candra from one marriage, and two sons named Kṛṣṇa dāsa and Sūrya dāsa from another. Eventually Harivaṁśa entrusted the service of Rādhā-vallabha to his sons and left home to live in the forest.

It is difficult to understand how Providence acts. Soon after his departure, Harivaṁśa was attacked in the forest by plunderers, who severed his head and threw it into the Yamunā River. The severed head floated down the river and arrived where Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī was bathing. Astonishingly, the head was still chanting Rādhā’s name. At first, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī was surprised to see a severed head chanting, “Rādhā, Rādhā,” but when he realized that it was Harivaṁśa’s head he greeted it, although he was pained at heart. The severed head slowly approached Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī and touched his lotus feet. The head said, “O master, please tell me –

will you forgive me for my offense?”

Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī replied, “Yes, I forgive you.”

Then Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī placed his lotus feet on the severed head. Having received shelter at his guru’s lotus feet, Harivaṁśa became eligible for liberation. Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī returned home and told everyone what had happened.

Know for certain that Kṛṣṇa will bestow His mercy on an offender only if he is forgiven by the person he offended. Unless one becomes freed from his offenses, there is no way to attain the Lord’s mercy. This is true even for a great devotee. What to speak of the offender himself, even his children are not spared the reactions to an offense, and they are often rejected by Vaiṣṇavas.

Reference: Prema-vilāsa (Pastimes of Divine Love)
by Śrī Nityānanda dāsa
Published by Touch Stone. Pages 189-190.

Kūrma-avatāra (Tortoise Incarnation)

Among the incarnations of Bhagavān Viṣṇu, the tortoise incarnation (Kūrma-avatāra) is the second one. The story of the tortoise incarnation is as follows. Brahmā produced the nine progenitors: Bhṛgu, Marīci, Atri, Dakṣa, Pulatsya, Pulaha, Aṅgirā, and Kratu. Durvāsā, the son of Maharṣi Atri, was a very powerful sage and great ascetic. He tended to become very angry, and he was capable of disturbing the whole universe.

Once upon a time, Durvāsā went to the heavenly planets to meet Indra. At that time Indra, after being worshiped by all of the demigods, was preparing to ride somewhere on his elephant. The great ascetic Durvāsā was pleased to see Indra, and with honor he presented the king of the demigods a garland of Pārijāta flowers. Indra took that garland and placed it on the head of the elephant, and then he walked towards Nandana-vana, the garden where demigods enjoy celestial pleasures. The elephant started to go mad from intoxication; it removed the garland with its trunk, threw the broken garland on the ground and crushed it under its feet.

Seeing this, Durvāsā became angry and gave the following curse: “O king of demigods, due to being intoxicated with the royal opulence of the three worlds, you have offended me. Therefore, you

will surely lose that opulence.” After being cursed by Durvāsā in this way, Indra returned to his city. Thereafter, the goddess of fortune Lakṣmī, the mother of the whole universe, disappeared. All of the moving and non-moving living entities of the world, including the demigods headed by Lord Brahmā, the Gandharvas, the Kinnaras, the Daityas, the Dānavas, the Nāgas (snakes), the human beings, the Rākṣasas (demons), and the animals, birds, and insects began to suffer from poverty.

Distressed by hunger and thirst, everyone approached Lord Brahmā and said, “Bhagavān, we are afflicted by hunger and thirst! You are the master and protector of all of the planetary systems. We have surrendered to you, O master of the demigods; please protect us.”

Brahmā replied, “O living entities including the demigods, demons, Gandharvas, and human beings, listen! This danger has arisen from the improper behavior of Indra. The anger of Durvāsā is destroying the three worlds. The sidelong glance of Mahā-lakṣmī, the mother of the whole world, makes everyone happy. Therefore, let us all go and worship Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa, the eternal Lord. When Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa is pleased, the welfare of the world is assured.” Then Brahmā, accompanied by all of the demigods and great sages such as Bhṛgu, went to the shore of the milk ocean and carefully worshiped Him through the hymns of Puruṣa-sūkta. Bhagavān was pleased and gave audience to them. Bhagavān said, “Goddess Lakṣmī has disappeared due to the curse of Durvāsā, the son of the sage Atri. Therefore, you should uproot the Mandarācala Mountain and place it in the milk ocean. Attach Vāsuki, the king of snakes, to that mountain like a rope, making that mountain like a churning stick. Then, along with the Daityas, Gandharvas, and Dānavas, churn the ocean. If you do this, Lakṣmī shall manifest for the protection of the world. As soon as you receive her merciful glance, you shall attain good fortune. In My tortoise form, I shall carry the Mandara Mountain on My back. Moreover, I shall enter inside all of the demigods and strengthen them through My power.” After saying this, Bhagavān disappeared.

Thereafter, all of the strong demigods and demons lifted Mandara Mountain and placed it in the milk ocean. At that time Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa, who is endowed with boundless strength, manifested in the form of a tortoise and held that mountain on His

back. That all-pervading Lord held the peak of that mountain with one hand. Then the demigods and demons began to churn the milk ocean by tying up Vāsuki, the king of the snakes, to the Mandarācala Mountain. As they were churning, all of the great sages observed fasting, and controlling their minds and senses, they recited Śrī Sūkta, the hymns glorifying the goddess of fortune, and Viṣṇu-sahastra-nāma, the thousand names of Lord Viṣṇu. Churning of the ocean began on the day of *śuddha-ekādaśī*, the pure eleventh day in the lunar cycle that does not overlap with *daśamī*, the tenth day. The distinguished *brāhmaṇas* and great sages, desiring to manifest the goddess of fortune, meditated on and worshiped Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa and His consort Goddess Lakṣmī.

During the churning, the most dangerous poison, Kāla-kūṭa, appeared as a large ball. It resembled the terrible fire that appears at the time of the cosmic annihilation. Seeing it, all of the demigods and demons ran away in fear. Within his heart, Śrī Śaṅkara meditated upon Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa, who relieves all distress. While chanting with devotion the *mahā-mantra* consisting of Śrī Hari's three names (Acyuta, Ananta, and Govinda), Śrī Śaṅkara drank the deadly poison. One who chants these three names with one-pointed attention no longer fears the time factor or death.

After further churning of the ocean, Daridrā-devī, the goddess of poverty and elder sister of Lakṣmījī, appeared. She asked the demigods, "What is your order for me?" The demigods replied, "We order you to reside in the houses of people who quarrel daily. You should live in such houses along with your associate Inauspiciousness. You should give distress and poverty to people who always lie and speak harshly, and permanently live with them."

After giving this order to Daridrā-devī, the demigods continued to churn the milk ocean. Then beautiful-eyed Vāruṇī-devī, who was accepted by Nāgarāja Ananta, the king of the snakes, appeared. After that, a woman having all auspicious attributes who was decorated with various ornaments, and who was accepted by Garuḍa, appeared. Thereafter the heavenly damsels (Apsarās) and very powerful Gandharvas, who were very beautiful and luminous like the sun and moon, appeared. Then the elephant Airāvata, the horse Uccaiṣravā, the doctor Dhanvantari, the Pārijāta tree, and Surabhi cow, who fulfills all desires, appeared. Indra welcomed all of them with great pleasure.

Mahā-lakṣmī manifested in the morning of *dvādaśī*, and the demigods were very happy to see her. Thereafter, the moon, the brother of the goddess of fortune who gives off cooling, nectarean rays, appeared from the ocean of milk. Then Tulasī-devī, the wife of Śrī Hari and mother of the whole world, appeared to facilitate the worship of Śrī Hari. The demigods were pleased, and they placed Mandarācala at the appropriate location and glorified Lakṣmī. Lakṣmī was pleased and said, “Please tell me your desires.”

The demigods replied, “O Lakṣmī-devī, beloved of Viṣṇu, be pleased with us and return to the chest of Śrī Viṣṇu. You should not be separated from Bhagavān, and never abandon the three worlds.” Then Brahmā and Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa appeared. The demigods folded their hands and said, “Please accept Mahā-rāṇī (the great queen) Lakṣmī as the protector of the world.” Brahmā and the other demigods offered special seats to Bhagavān Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī, and worshiped them. They used the soft leaves of Tulasī-devī which had manifested from the milk ocean to worship the lotus feet of Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa. Bhagavān Śrī Hari, the master of the demigods, and Lakṣmī-devī were pleased with the demigods, and they granted their hearts’ desires. After that, the demigods and human beings became happy; wealth and grains were abundant, and they became free from diseases.

Bhagavān Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī were pleased, and for the benefit of all of the planetary systems they said to the great sages and demigods, “The day of *ekādaśī* is very auspicious; it mitigates all disturbances. You fasted on this day to obtain the audience of Lakṣmī; therefore, it will always be very dear to Me. From now on, those who fast on *ekādaśī* and worship Lakṣmī and Tulasī with great faith after sunrise on the morning of *dvādaśī* will become free from all bondage, and they will obtain My topmost abode.”

While the sages offered praise to Bhagavān Viṣṇu, He returned to the milk ocean, the abode of Lakṣmī-devī. He took His place on the bed of Śeṣa along with Lakṣmī-devī. Having worshiped the eternal Bhagavān who had taken the form of a tortoise, the demigods were full of bliss.

Following the order of Bhagavān, the demigods headed by Lord Brahmā, the perfected beings (*siddhas*), the human beings, the mystics (*yogīs*), and the great sages observed fasting on *ekādaśī* and worshiped Bhagavān on *dvādaśī*.

Sābudāṇā granules

There are many Sābudāṇā factories in Tamilnadu, near Salem, on the road from Salem to Coimbatore. One notices a very bad smell about two kilometers from the factories.

Sābudāṇā is made from tapioca root, which resembles sweet potato. These roots grow in Kerala, and they weigh about six kilograms. Factory owners buy them in bulk during the growing season, make them into pulp, and put the pulp in pits about 40 feet x 25 feet. The pits are in open ground, and the pulp is allowed to rot for several months. Thousands of tons of roots rot in the pits. Huge electric bulbs shine on the pits throughout the night, and millions of insects are attracted to the light and fall in the pits.

While the pulp is rotting, water is added daily, and as a result, two-inch long, white worms find their way into the pits, just like various pests appear in street gutters. The pit walls are covered by millions of worms, and factory owners use machines to crush the pulp, along with the worms, into a paste. This process is repeated many times over a period of five to six months.

The paste is thus a mixture of crushed roots and millions of pests and insects. This paste is passed through mesh and formed into small balls, and the balls are polished. This is Sābudāṇā.

Scientific Study

Comparing Fasting on Ekādaśī and Random Days

Fasting has been known for centuries, or perhaps millennia, to have beneficial and restorative effects on the body. More recently, it has been discovered to affect the central nervous system, especially the brain, altering essential life-regulating mechanisms associated with the hippocampus (cognition), striatum (control of bodily movements), hypothalamus (control of food intake and body temperature), as well as brain stem (control of the cardiovascular and digestive systems). Fasting has also been shown to affect all other major bodily systems, especially musculo-skeletal, blood, and key organs, increasing the adaptive cellular responses that reduce oxidative damage and inflammation, optimize energy metabolism,

and bolster cellular production. Thus, fasting is widely applied in Naturopathic treatments at the outset to foster an internal environment which is conducive to regeneration and detoxification.

In today's world, there is an abundance of artificial substances that contribute to degeneration of health and loss of the basic functions of the homeostatic systems, and promote unnatural dependency. This leads to physical as well as psychological disorders; indeed, it is widely accepted that both mind and body function as an integrated unit, and thus a disturbance in one will undoubtedly affect the other. The inability of the body and mind to enter into a proper rhythm with the cycles of nature perpetuates a state of unrest and disease. This is evident with respect to sleep, rest, and eating cycles, and periods of psychological and physical activity and inactivity. "Therefore the transition from one state to another is somewhat problematic, delayed, incomplete, and de-synchronized."

Naturopathy principles indicate that nature always comprises a complete, perfect whole which tends to rebuild and restore itself to its original, optimal condition. If obstacles that cause disease are removed, health will automatically follow. Our hypothesis is that proper rhythm within the body's homeostatic and metabolic functions can be restored by observing proper fasting on specific days of the lunar cycle. The moon has a major influence on the electromagnetic rhythms affecting the Earth as a whole.

Our project is based on assessment of bodily bio-energetic fields measured using sophisticated technology which scans the photons of light emitted from the fingertips, and calculation of data regarding the energy field of the body (gas discharge visualization, or GDV). Our research was done to determine if fasting on the eleventh day of the moon cycle (*ekādaśī*) results in more significant bio-energetic fluctuations than fasting on a random day. All life on Earth functions according to rhythms, and according to ancient scriptures, by fasting on this particular day one establishes a higher and more subtle connection with the forces of nature governing all of the bodily and mental processes, as well as with the Supreme Consciousness known as Paramātmā (*Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, Ninth Canto, Śrī Ambarīṣa Mahārāja).

Our study measured bio-energetics and psychological

variations in subjects, and demonstrated a powerful effect of *ekādaśī* on the mind and body. Thus, we believe that deep-rooted psychological and psycho-emotional problems, which cause long-term suffering from psychosomatic diseases that lead to a destructive lifestyle, may be addressed at the source.

Our experiment demonstrated a profound difference between fasting on *ekādaśī* and fasting on other days of the moon cycle, in terms of aura, *cakras*, and flow of energy to different organs. There was significantly more activation of masculine energy in females, and activation of feminine energy in males. This supports the hypothesis that by regularly fasting on *ekādaśī*, both men and women become more aligned with monthly electromagnetic cycles. This leads to a more balanced and integrated energetic system, and enhanced intuition and mental stability. Moreover, it enables one to explore deeper layers of consciousness, beginning with subconscious patterns. Our habits and choices are deeply influenced by subconscious belief patterns, and it is clear that regularly fasting on *ekādaśī* allows one to better distinguish what is true from what is false, and what is beneficial from what is unnecessary, within one's psycho-emotional states. This promotes an optimal state of well-being and balance, which makes for a perfect whole.

An exploratory study

Effect of fasting on *ekādaśī* vs. fasting on a random day on subtle energy dynamics in healthy volunteers

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What is the effect of the eleventh day of the lunar cycle on fasting?

Research was conducted on seven subjects. Three women and four men from three different countries fasted with juice on *ekādaśī* and on another day of the lunar cycle in a similar phase of the moon to determine whether subtle differences in bio-electric feedback in the energy fields could be measured on the different days.

Our research is to determine whether there is a correlation between the spiritual recommendations in *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Purāṇa* regarding *ekādaśī* fasting, and practical analysis of subjects demonstrating improved homeostasis, regulation, and bio-rhythms.

Methods and Procedures

Tools

Gas Discharge Visualization (GDV)–bio-electric energy field measuring device

Procedure

Freshly-juiced watermelon and *mosambi* (Citrus limetta, sweet lime) juice (400 ml or 13.53 US fluid ounces) was given to each subject at four-hour intervals for a total of four times on each day of fasting. Each fasting day was on a rest day when there was no strenuous physical or mental exertion.

Abbreviations

Epre – Ekādaśī Day Pre-fasting,

Epost – Ekādaśī Day Post-fasting

Rpre – Random Day Pre-fasting

Rpost – Random Day Post-fasting

Data analysis results

1. Increase in overall entropy for all subjects

Epre 1.73 ± 0.24 , **Epost** 1.94 ± 0.11 ;

Rpre 1.88 ± 0.18 , **Rpost** 1.91 ± 0.22

Significance

1. Level of tolerance to external influences
2. High entropy is also observed during recovery after illness (Korotkov, 2011)

2. Increase in front projection symmetry

Epre 0.91 ± 0.02 , **Epost** 0.92 ± 0.01 ;

Rpre 0.90 ± 0.04 , **Rpost** 0.91 ± 0.04

Significance

- Women who fasted on *ekādaśī* had more activity and activation of their masculine energies (right side), and men who fasted on *ekādaśī*

had more activation of their feminine energies (left side).

- The symmetry of Echo Planar Imaging (EPI) images turned out to be a significant indicator when investigating the psycho-emotional condition. (Korotkov, 2011)

3. Significant increase in integral area on *ekādaśī* and decrease on random days

Epre -0.04 ± 0.25 , **Epost** 0.07 ± 0.10 ;

Rpre -0.14 ± 0.30 , **Rpost** -0.23 ± 0.57

Significance

1. Significant tension/stress of adaptation and energy-supply systems
2. Character of metabolism; adequacy of functional reserves
3. Vital resources (Korotkov, 2011)

Conclusion (1)

In males, fasting on *ekādaśī* produced a greater transformation in their female energy, and in females, fasting on *ekādaśī* produced a greater transformation in their masculine energy.

Significance

1. When men fasted on *ekādaśī*, their feminine intuitive energies were augmented. Increased sensitivity and perception are essential for health, allowing the 'doctor within' to provide the deepest level of healing.
2. When women fasted on *ekādaśī*, their masculine energies were enhanced.

Conclusion (2)

Homeostasis, recovery from stress, optimization of vital systems, and autonomic regulation improved more by fasting on *ekādaśī* than by fasting on a random day.

Significance

1. These results show an improvement in vital energies as a result of fasting on *ekādaśī* compared to fasting on a random day. According to ancient scriptures, *ekādaśī* fasting attunes one with the cosmic energies of the Infinite.

2. In terms of natural healing, when one fasts on *ekādaśī* there is profound attuning with inner intelligence which is capable of restoring well-being at the deepest levels of body, mind, and spirit.

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